4455.g.1

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS,

IN

TWO VOLUMES,

BY

HENRY WOLSTENHOLME, M.A.

LATE RECTOR OF LIVERPOOL.

VOL. I.

LIVERPOOL:

Printed at SMITH's Navigation Shop.

MDCCXC.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Author of theſe Sermons died in the Year 1771, *and from his own Preface, the Public will, no doubt, think his Succeſſors were bound to their Publication. They are now offered to the World, with the firmeſt Conviction of the Truth of the Doctrines they contain, and will not fail to gratify and inſtruct the truly Chriſtian and pious Reader on an attentive Peruſal.*

As the unavoidable errors of the Preſs will be readily amended, ſo each ſlight deviation in Orthography or Punctuation will not deſerve a particular Annotation. Had the Author himſelf ſuperintended the Preſs, theſe Sheets would certainly have derived advantage from his Care.

TO

TO THE READER.

IT was not any Expectation of ſhining as an Author in this learned and critical Age, that induced the Compoſer of the Sermons contained in theſe two Volumes, to order the Publication of them after his Death. His Time, at his firſt Admiſſion into the Service of the Church, was for many Years too much employed in the performance of Parochial Duty, in a very extenſive Cure, to ſuffer him to acquire that knowledge, to which poſſibly he might otherwiſe have attained. Three-fourths, at leaſt, of the following Diſcourſes are of his own compoſition: The reſt are Collections from ſeveral of the moſt approved Writers, on the particular Subjects treated of in them, mixed with

with his own Reflections, and put together in ſuch a Manner, as he conceived might give the Doctrines the greateſt force upon the Minds of his Hearers; of whom many did deſire, that ſome of them ſhould be often preached to them, and others, printed. In compliance with this Deſire, he gave Direction for their Publication; but chiefly, that being peruſed with Attention by his beloved Pariſhoners after his Death, they might, in ſome Meaſure, ſupply the defects of his Miniſtration amongſt them in much weakneſs, whilſt living. If, as he hoped, they ſhould produce the deſired effect, he hath his End: The Glory be to God.

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS.

VOL. I. PAGE.

SERMON I.

Gen. i. 27.—*So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him* - - - 1

SERMON II.

I. *John* iii. 4.—*Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law.* - - - 29

SERMON III.

Eccles. viii. 11.—*Becauſe Sentence againſt an evil Work is not executed ſpeedily; therefore, the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully ſet in them to do evil.* - - 52

SERMON IV.

Exod. xxiii. 2.—*Thou ſhalt not follow a Multitude to do Evil.* - - 79

SERMON V.

Prov. xviii. 14.—*The Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmity, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?* - - 103

SERMON

CONTENTS.

VOL. I. PAGE.

SERMON VI.

Matth. v. 20.—*Except your Righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall in no Caſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* - - 131

SERMON VII.

Phil. iv. 13 —*I can do all Things through Chriſt, which ſtrengtheneth me.* - 156

SERMON VIII.

John xi. 25, 26 —*I am the Reſurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die.* - - 189

SERMON IX.

Heb. vi. 19, 20.—*Which hope we have, as an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the Vail, whither our Forerunner is for us entered, even Jeſus.* - - 211

VOL.

CONTENTS.

VOL. I. PAGE.

SERMON X.

Matth. xxv. 21.—*Well done good and faithful Servant, thou haſt been faithful in a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many things; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* - - - 234

SERMON XI.

Jude. v. 3 —*Beloved, when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered to the Saints.* - - 265

SERMON XII.

Rom. xiii. 1 —*Let every Soul be ſubject unto the Higher Powers.* - - 310

SERMONS

SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL OCCASIONS.

SERMON I.

Gen. 1, *Verſe* 27. *So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him.*

THOUGH Moſes, the inſpired Writer of this Book, hath twice affirmed in this one verſe, that God created man in his own Image, on purpoſe, it may be preſumed, to awaken the attention, and gain the more credit with his Readers; yet there are ſome in theſe our days, who, both in private converſation and

in print, have in effect charged him with falſe Doctrine. A certain modern Author, hath ſuggeſted to the Public, a particular notion, which, in its conſequences, directly overthrows this aſſertion of Moſes: He affirms that God hath given to man a freedom of will to chuſe; and a freedom of action to do what he chuſes; but for wiſe Reaſons, to us unknown, he hath alſo given him a weak underſtanding on the one hand, and ſtrong affections and appetites on the other, which he is naturally inclined to follow; and which, as they ſtir him up to action, do often conduct him to wrong objects, or withdraw him from right ones; and both with ſuch eagerneſs, that he doth but ſeldom conſult his own reaſon, before he acts; and when he does, his determinations are often wrong, through his not eſtimating things according to their true value: All which make him commit actions, which, upon more mature deliberation, he would avoid. Thus, ſaith he, is Man liable to error; he might have ſaid, the moſt flagitious and enormous crimes.

And is this the image of God, in which man was originally created? Is not this firſt to form a Creature

a Creature with a conſtitution, neceſſarily determining it to ſin and miſery? And is not this to make God the author of ſin, and conſequently to blaſpheme?

This Author hath juſtly obſerved, that the ſurface of the earth is broken and irregular; and like a fragment of ſomething once more entire, as is alſo that of the Moon, which appears, as if ſhe had ſhared in the fate of her principal.—And might not this obſervation have naturally led him to a ſuppoſition, or rather a moſt ſenſible perception of a like change in the Microcoſm or little World, man, that he too in his preſent ſtate of corruption and depravity, is but the broken remains of ſomething once more entire; eſpecially as he ſuppoſes all theſe natural alterations to have been the conſequences of moral guilt in their inhabitants.

The Treatiſe, of which I am now ſpeaking, is entitled, by its Author, The Principles of Morality and Chriſtianity, illuſtrated from a View of the Univerſe and Man's Situation in it, intended to rectify men's ideas, to remove vulgar prejudices, and fix Religion on a true and firm baſis, by not being led by authority and cuſtom,

but following nature and reaſon, guides, which afford the beſt lights in every ſearch after truth, the leaſt fallible interpreters of ſcripture. Yet theſe, it ſeems, have guided him to leave out of his Creed that doctrine, on which the Chriſtian Religion ſtands, viz. The fall of man from his original righteouſneſs, that image of God, in which he was created, by his own wilful tranſgreſſion; to which he was not neceſſarily determined, either by weakneſs of underſtanding, or by the irreſiſtible ſtrength of implanted paſſions and appetites, which cannot be admitted without impeaching the Holineſs of God, and making him the Author of all the ſins and miſeries of mankind.

To this fall of our firſt parents then we are to aſcribe that corruption of nature, that evil concupiſence; that delight in miſchief, merely for its own ſake, which the very philoſophers plainly ſaw and much lamented; but knew not how to account for, in providing a remedy for which, the infinite love and mercy of God hath ſo glorioufly appeared. Nature and reaſon, we muſt allow to be the beſt guides to the knowledge of the certainty of a divine Revelation, which leads us to truths, we could not otherwiſe have known.

But

But how hath *this* Author's reaſon guided him? Why only to turn the hiſtory of the fall of man into Allegory, and then explain it all away.—Eve, ſaith he, was tempted by the Serpent, that is, not (as we are taught to believe) by that old Serpent, the Devil, in an aſſumed form; but by her own vicious inclinations.—Vicious inclinations in a creature formed after the image of God and before the fall! Whence came they, but from the God that formed it?—And is not this to blaſpheme? A conſequence allowed by himſelf to be a ſufficient objection againſt any Doctrine! Why then not againſt his own? Yet to avoid the imputation of blaſphemy, a conſequence, he ſeems to have been aware of, he tells us, that our firſt parents were innocent at the very inſtant of their Creation, only becauſe they had not time to commit Sin. Strange vindication of the Creator this! To have made moral agents innocent, that could remain ſo no longer, than until they had an opportunity to ſin! To have made a Creature neceſſarily determined to ſin, and conſequently to miſery, had been cruel; and to have redeemed it from that wretched ſtate had been little better than the reparation of an injury. But in the work of

our redemption are displayed all the treasures of infinite wisdom, love and mercy; for which our highest acts of gratitude and adoration, are for ever due.

DOUBTLESS the Scripture, which this Author allows to be of Divine Revelation, hath some real meaning, when it saith, that by one man's disobedience, many were made sinners, and that we are, by nature, the Children of Wrath, meaning by nature not that which we derived immediately from God; but from our first Parents, estranged from him by their own wilful disobedience. A truth this, which they are usually most offended at, who are themselves living examples and evident demonstrations of it; a truth, however repugnant to this gentleman's sentiments, abundantly declared in the holy Scriptures; a truth upon which the whole Christian Dispensation stands. For, concerning the present corruption of human nature, there can be no dispute. No day passes without a discovery of its horrible effects; and every man, that knows the difference between right and wrong, between virtuous and vicious inclinations, feels it but too sensibly within his own breast; and I am

very

very ſure that it cannot be affirmed, without blaſphemy, that man was, what he now is, by his original formation; for God made man in his own Image, in the Image of God made he him.

In a further diſcourſe on which words to prevent the ill conſequences of ſuch impious ſuggeſtions, and for other motives, that may appear in the ſequel, I ſhall,

First, ſhew wherein the Image of God in man, in which he was created, did conſiſt; and then,

Secondly, draw ſome uſeful inferences from what ſhall have been ſaid.

I. As Man conſiſts of two parts, Body and Soul, theſe lines of reſemblance between God and him, muſt be found either in the ſubſtance or qualities of one or both of them; but not in thoſe of the body. For the body is material, corruptible, frail, and mortal, depending for its ſubſiſtence on things extrinſic to it, and liable to diſſolution by its very conſtitution; but God is a Spirit, pure, dependent upon nothing without himſelf, incorporeal, eternal, immortal, inviſible, and therefore can not be likened to any corporeal

corporeal or material being whatſoever. So juſt is that challenge: To whom will ye liken me, or what likeneſs will ye compare to me? ſaith the Lord; and that command, thou ſhalt not make to thyſelf any graven Image, nor the likeneſs of any thing, that is in the Heaven above, or in the Earth beneath, or in the Waters under the earth, all corporeal repreſentations of him, being manifeſt abſurdities in the nature of things, and highly diſhonourable to his Majeſty; as all adorations of him under ſuch repreſentations are the groſſeſt acts of Idolatry, againſt which he hath denounced the ſevereſt vengeance.

It is true, indeed, that the holy Scriptures, do aſcribe to God, ſeveral of the members of the human body; thus it is ſaid, that, The cries of the oppreſſed have entered into the ears of the Lord of Hoſts; that, There is no concealing ourſelves from his All-ſeeing eye; that, The Heavens are the work of his Hands, and that, The mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken. Theſe expreſſions are no other, than condeſcenſions to the human capacity, a ſpeaking after the manner of men; and their true meaning is no more, than that God will ſurely avenge the oppreſſed, whoſe ſufferings are known to him; that his knowledge

knowledge and power are infinite; that he hath often made known his will and purpoſes to mankind, and that his Counſels and Decrees are ſuch as cannot be reverſed. The erect poſture of the body, which the Heathen Writers ſo much gloried in (Os homini ſublime dedit, Cælumque tueri Juſſit) doth by no means conſtitute this Image of God in Man. For though he can ſcarcely open his eyes without ſeeing thoſe Heavens, from which his ſoul, that particle of a divine breath, or God-like Spirit, took its deſcent; whilſt nature directs the viſion of the brute creation to its kindred earth; yet this gives him no reſemblance to that infinite Spirit, that filleth all things, and hath neither body, parts, nor paſſions. As this divine Image, therefore, is not to be found in the ſubſtance or qualities of the body of man, others have ſought for it, in that relation, which he bears to the other animals, which God created for his uſe, and over which he gave him the dominion; and on that dominion do they found this divine Image, in which man was originally created: And this opinion, ſay they, is ſtrongly ſupported by the context: God ſaid, Let us make Man in our Image, after our Likeneſs, and let them have

Dominion over the Fiſh of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and over the Cattle, and over all the Earth, and over every creeping Thing, that creepeth upon the Earth. So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him: And God bleſſed them, and ſaid unto them, be fruitful and multiply, and repleniſh the Earth, and ſubdue it, and have dominion over the Fiſh of the Sea, and over the Fowl of the Air, and every other living thing, that moveth upon the Earth. In this dominion, therefore, thus mentioned immediately after God's declaration of his intention to create, and his actual Creation of Man, in his own Image, they think it moſt rational to conclude, that this Image of God in Man muſt conſiſt.

And here it deſerves our notice, that the Royal Pſalmiſt hath juſtly celebrated the love of God to Man on this very conſideration, Pſalm 8th. "When I conſider thy Heavens, the work of thy fingers, the Moon and the Stars, which thou haſt ordained," then I cannot but with equal gratitude and wonder, celebrate thy Goodneſs and ſay, "Lord! What is Man, that thou art mindful of him, and the ſon of man, that thou viſiteſt him? For thou haſt made him a little

lower

lower than the Angels, and haſt crowned him with glory and honour: Thou madeſt him to have dominion over the works of thy Hands: Thou haſt put all things under his feet." Here it muſt be owned, that the Sovereignty of God over the whole Univerſe, is, in ſome meaſure, though very faintly, reſembled by Man's Dominion over the Creatures here on Earth; but then it cannot hence be concluded, that the Likeneſs of Man to God conſiſts wholly, if in part, in this Dominion. For God firſt propoſes to make Man in his own Image, and then to give him that Dominion. The Divine Image, therefore, was firſt impreſſed on Man, and then that dominion conferred upon him. The reſemblance, therefore, was prior to it, and Man was and would have been like to God, had it never been conferred. How perfect ſoever therefore his Dominion over the Creatures was originally; yet if Man was at the firſt, what he now by nature is, a ſlave to appetite and luſt, he would have been, notwithſtanding his dominion over the Creatures, a moſt unworthy and deformed image of that pure and holy God, that created him. Hence then I conclude, that we ſhall be obliged to look for this

Image of God in Man, not in the Body, nor in this dominion over the inferior Creatures; but in the Subſtance, Powers, or Affections of the Soul.

As to the internal eſſence of the Soul, that is utterly unknown to us, as the eſſences even of Bodies are; but as from the qualities of ſenſible objects, we juſtly infer a Subject, in which they do exiſt, which we call *Body:* So from the different powers of ſomething within us, we infer a diſtinct ſubject, in which they do exiſt; which we call *Soul* or *Spirit*; and from both its powers and operations, which are entirely different from thoſe eſſential to matter, we juſtly infer, that it muſt be a Being of a different nature, and conſequently ſpiritual and immaterial. This part of our compoſition brings us to a nearer reſemblance to the divine Being; for he is a Spirit, that cannot be ſeen by mortal eyes, yet is infallibly known both to be, and to be what he is, by his viſible operations. But here again as there is a great variety of bodies: So we may be ſure, there is of ſpirits alſo.

THE Spirit of God is ſelf-exiſtent, immortal, uncreated, infinite; all other ſpirits are created dependent,

dependent, finite, and, if immortal, indebted for their immortality to the bounty of that creating, uncreated Spirit, that formed them; for the duration of all created beings, whether corporeal or incorporeal, muſt depend upon the purpoſe and actual ſupport of the Creator. It is the ſame divine power, that did make and doth preſerve all things; and when he ceaſeth to will, that they ſhould exiſt, they are no more. And therefore, although in the nature of things, an immaterial, incorporeal Spirit ſeems to be farther removed from diſſolution, than a body made up of many jarring elements, which, when the proper temper, on which their union depends, is diſturbed, will naturally bring on a diſſolution: Yet, for the reaſons above mentioned, the Spirituality of the Soul will render it but a faint reſemblance of that immenſe, omnipreſent, eternal Spirit, that created it. Yea, though God hath deſigned it for an eternal exiſtence, it being moſt certain that it had a beginning, though it may never have an end.—Whereas the ſelf-exiſtent Deity neither had Beginning, nor ever ſhall have End. Neither, therefore, the ſpirituality nor the immortality of the Soul will come up to the fulneſs of this expreſſion, that God made Man in his own image.

PROCEED we, therefore, now to conſider the powers, faculties, and affections of the Soul of man, to ſee if we cannot find a yet nearer reſemblance to the divine nature in them. And here, indeed, we may diſcover ſome lively ſtrictures of the divine Perfections, impreſſed upon the Soul. Is God intelligent? So is the human Soul. Can he extend his thoughts to an Eternity paſt and to come? He hath given to man a memory, by which he recollects things paſt within the ſphere of his own exiſtence, and a power of foreſeeing, in ſome degree, effects and conſequences in their cauſes, by which he ſometime gueſſes, with ſome probability, at future events. Doth God look through the univerſe every moment? It is in the power of man to carry his contemplations from the higheſt Heavens to the nethermoſt Hell. God ſees the eſſential differences and relations of things by intuition: Man diſcovers ſome few of them, by the powers of reaſon: And as by theſe powers he is diſtinguiſhed from the brute Creation; So by them he is brought nearer to a divine reſemblance. For no one can deny, that there is ſome analogy between theſe powers, as they exiſt in God, and as they are communicated to man.

But

But yet ſo great is the diſparity between the infinite knowledge of God, and the higheſt degrees of human knowledge; betwixt the divine Intuition and human reaſon; betwixt the divine Foreknowledge and Man's conjectures, that neither will this analogy come up to the full ſignificancy of this declaration of Moſes, That God made Man in his own Image. It remains, therefore, that the reſemblance of the human to the divine Nature muſt be ſought for, not in the natural powers, but moral diſpoſitions of the Soul, where—and where only it can be found.

The moral attributes of God are Truth, Purity, Juſtice, Mercy, Love, and theſe are perfections in ſome degree attainable by Man. He alſo may be true and juſt, holy, merciful and good; and he, that is ſuch a-one, is the moſt lively Image of his great Creator: This is that Image, that makes him a child of God, of whom the Father will not be aſhamed; yea, in whom he will be greatly delighted: This is that image, in which we were originally created, which by our firſt parents tranſgreſſion was forfeited and loſt, and which the Son of God became incarnate to reſtore. The very end of his coming into

into the world was, that we might be renewed after the image of Him, that created us; that we might put on the new man, which, after God, is created in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs. Hence we ſee the propriety of thoſe commands in holy Scripture, Be ye holy, for I am holy, be ye merciful as your Father which is in Heaven, is merciful, and perfect as he is perfect. For though we can never be equally perfect; yet this perfection we are all obliged earneſtly to aſpire after, as our moral perfections may be in ſome ſort the ſame in kind, though never in degree. That we ſhould thus imitate our Heavenly Father, was the very end for which he created us, and for which the Son of God redeemed us; and it is by the practice of theſe virtues only, that we can imitate him, and ſo let our light ſhine before men, that they ſeeing our good works, may glorify our Father which is in Heaven; and know, that God is in us of a truth.

As therefore Man was created in the Image of God, and this is the only reſpect, in which we can, with any tolerable propriety, be ſaid to reſemble him, there is no doubt, but that this

is

is that very image of God, in which we were originally created. And, indeed, God cannot be ſuppoſed to have made man ſuch as he now is, in his natural lapſed eſtate, without a manifeſt impeachment of his Holineſs. Hear how St. Paul deſcribes the natural man in this ſtate, ſurely not of original, but ſupervenient depravity: I know that the law is ſpiritual; but I am carnal, ſold under Sin. That which I do, I allow not; for what I would, I do not, but what I hate, that do I. I find then a law, that when I would do good, evil is preſent with me: For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man; but I ſee another law in my members warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of Sin, which is in my Members. O! wretched man that I am! Who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death? That is, from Sin, which dwelleth and worketh death in me.

SURELY never was there any Creature of God in that ſtate, in which he created it, ſo inconſiſtent with itſelf. The very Heathens (as I obſerved before) were not inſenſible of this corruption, which they plainly deſcribed, and

moſt pathetically lamented, I ſee better things and approve of them; yet I follow their contraries: This was their complaint, ſenſible of their diſeaſe; but ignorant both of the cauſe and remedy. And ſhall we impute the formation of ſuch a diſorderly creature (I ſpeak of man in his preſent natural ſtate) to a Being of infinite Wiſdom, Goodneſs and Purity? What doth it avail us to be intelligent and free, if, when we know good and evil, our liberty qualifies us to do evil only; this is not true liberty; for though God knoweth good and evil, yet he can do that only which is good. A power to do evil only, though never exerted into act, is a manifeſt imperfection. Nothing can be more unlike to God than ſuch a diſorderly, inconſiſtent creature, with a perpetual war within him, the Spirit luſting againſt the Fleſh, and the Fleſh againſt the Spirit, ſo that he cannot do the things that he would.

When God took a ſurvey of the works of his creation, he pronounced them not only good, but very good; and was not Man one of the principal of thoſe works, and can it now be ſaid, that he is very good? We may, therefore, juſtly

juſtly conclude, that when God was pleaſed to draw his own picture, he did not leave it ſuch an unfiniſhed piece, as man is in his preſent natural ſtate; but ſtamped upon him more lively ſignatures of his own perfections: Thoſe moral perfections, which are the glory both of the human and the divine nature; whence it may be ſtrongly inferred, that man is greatly fallen from his firſt eſtate. Look into yourſelves, or into the world about you! Obſerve that overflowing ungodlineſs, of the effects of which we have all of us but too much reaſon to be afraid? Obſerve how difficult it is to climb the rugged aſcent of Virtue! How eaſy to deſcend into the loweſt depths of Vice? See there the natural averſion to God and Goodneſs! the proneneſs of the Mind to Evil; the horrid effects of theſe natural diſpoſitions of the Soul; the acts of injuſtice, violence, deceit and cruelty, that every day produces! And you cannot well avoid concluding, that ſuch diſorderly creatures conſidered in their preſent natural unregenerate ſtate, could never be the immediate productions of a pure and holy God; any more than it is poſſible, that the ſame fountain ſhould at the ſame time ſend forth ſweet water and bitter;

and conſequently you muſt infer, that man hath loſt the original rectitude of his nature; and if it is loſt, then let the Deiſt aſſign a more rational account of the fall of Man, than that which is aſſigned by the inſpired Hiſtorian, or admit that which hath been revealed to us by him. Add to all this, that the Goſpel ſuppoſes all men to be, by nature, the Children of Wrath, dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins in which they walk according to the courſe of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the ſpirit that worketh in the children of diſobedience, which could never have been the condition of mankind, if they had continued in that ſtate, in which they were originally created; when God pronounced them good, and when nothing, that he had made, was diſpleaſing to him.

HEAR then the Teſtimony of an approved Writer:—"God made Man upright without "any defect in his compoſion, without any "original perverſeneſs of ſoul or falſe bias of "will, judgment or inclination. He made "him an intelligent Being, he endued him "with Liberty of Will, not to act of Neceſſity,

"but

" but with conſciouſneſs and voluntary Choice;
" he implanted in him divers Appetites and
" Affections, as uſeful inſtruments of his Hap-
" pineſs, if fitly employed; but none naturally
" vicious or culpable. Thus was Man created
" pure and perfect in his kind; and doubtleſs
" might have preſerved his original Rectitude.
" For all his natural Faculties being then right
" and good, and accommodated to the nature
" and law of God; there appears no reaſon why
" he might not have obſerved that law and pre-
" ſerved his Innocence; for certainly a juſt
" and righteous God, neither did nor could en-
" join what he knew to be impoſſible to be ob-
" ſerved."

But although there was no ſuch original diſ-ability in man to obey the will of God (as we have before deſcribed); yet there hath ariſen a moral one, an accidental incapacity, ſupervenient to our nature; for by the fall of our firſt parents, the holy Spirit of God was eſtranged from them and their poſterity; the balance that kept their appetites and affections in regularity and order, was withdrawn; reaſon became too weak, and theſe appetites too ſtrong; and their poſterity

poſterity was infected, the Leaven being diffuſed through all generations; for who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? This, then, is that original corruption, by whatſoever name it is called, that is entailed on all the poſterity of fallen man: This is that which the pious Pſalmiſt ſo pathetically bewails, 'Behold I was ſhapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my mother conceive me.' This is that he ſo earneſtly prays for the removal of, 'Make me a clean heart, O God! and renew a right Spirit within me.' To this it is to be aſcribed, that both Jews and Gentiles are by nature under Sin, all having ſinned and come ſhort of the glory of God; ſo that no Fleſh could be juſtified in his ſight. Thus have I ſhewn you wherein that Image of God in Man, in which he was originally created, did conſiſt, and how it was loſt; which, by the way, gives a more rational account of the origin of evil, than all the voluminous Tracts, that have been written on that perplexing ſubject, not built on this foundation. Let us now ſee what uſeful inferences may be deduced from what has been ſaid. And firſt, hence we may diſcover the neceſſity of a poſitive command for the trial of our

firſt

firſt parents' obedience. For, conſidering the original Rectitude, in which they were created, it is not eaſy to conceive, how any moral vice ſhould have prevailed over them in that primæval ſtate. We may be ſure that love was a predominant affection in their breaſts, as they were the creatures of a Being, who, as St. John tells us, is Love itſelf. No hatred, therefore, could poſſibly be found in Paradiſe: for our firſt parents were reciprocally the objects of each other's love, and had the one been wanting to the other, Paradiſe itſelf had been no Paradiſe to either: Neither is it poſſible, that envy could find a place there; for love never repines at the proſperity, nor rejoices in the adverſity of its object, as envy does: Nor revenge; for then no prior injuries could be ſuppoſed to have been done; neither could deceit have found a harbour there; for though the tempter had artifice enough to deceive our firſt parents; yet moſt vain had been his efforts, if he had tempted either of them to deceive the other; before one of them had been firſt deceived: No avarice, nor anxiety, becauſe God had provided an abundant ſupply for all their wants, and thoſe of uncorrupted nature are but few: The fruits of

the

the earth did then ſpontaneouſly ſpring forth without their toil, and they had no reaſon to ſuſpect that ſupply would ever fail:—Not ambition; for none knows who is maſter, where true affection reigns: No exceſs, no drunkenneſs or gluttony; for delicacy of taſte and liquors of Intoxication are of much later invention, the brood of luxury and long increaſing irregularity of appetite. In ſhort, they could have no temptation to, nor did they know what moral evil was; and therefore could not have committed it.

But why then, ſay ſome, was God ſo highly offended at them for tranſgreſſing one prohibition, in which otherwiſe there was no moral turpitude; as to withdraw from them, or at leaſt to leſſen the influence of his holy Spirit upon them? To this we anſwer, that their obedience was to be tried: And what more eaſy teſt, than to have abſtained from the uſe of the Fruit of ONE Tree at the command of God, who had indulged them in the free uſe of ALL the reſt, as pleaſant to the eye, and good for food as that? The more reaſonable the command

mand and the eaſier the teſt of obedience is, the greater muſt be the ingratitude and guilt of the tranſgreſſion.

Second.—Hence alſo we may infer, that it is the recovery of this loſt Image, on which our temporal, but eſpecially our eternal happineſs depends. For we muſt be holy, juſt, good and true, as God is, or we can never hope to ſee his Face with Joy. Without Holineſs, which includes all theſe amiable diſpoſitions, no man can ſee the Lord. Nor let any man here object and ſay, that this is only to preach up moral Virtue. For Truth and Juſtice, Love and Mercy, are the eſſential attributes of God, and in the imitation of him by the practice of theſe Virtues, our higheſt perfection conſiſts. For though theſe diſpoſitions, as founded on moral conſiderations only, are no other than mere moral Virtues; yet as they do proceed from Faith in Chriſt, without which poſſibly they never were attained in any good degree, they change their complexion and become Chriſtian graces; and as they are wrought in us by the ſanctifying Spirit of God, they may be truly called the Fruits of that Spirit; for the Fruits of the Spirit are Love, Joy,

Peace, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Truth: And as they are produced by the Love of God, ſhed abroad in our hearts, they are a lively tranſcript of his own Nature, and render the poſſeſſor of them a child of God, and an object of his favour, through the redemption that is in Chriſt Jeſus.

THIRD.—Hence alſo we may learn the true nature of regeneration, which is a recovery of that image of God, that rectitude of nature, in which we were originally created; conſiſting not in outward profeſſions, but in real internal Holineſs; not in the form, but the Power of Godlineſs; not in warm imaginations, but in real Qualities; in Truth, Juſtice, Benevolence, Purity, Goodneſs, Mercy, and the bringing us to ſuch a ſtate is not improperly called regeneration; not only becauſe it is by the power of the holy Spirit working in us, that we are thus, as it were, created anew; but alſo becauſe there is as great a difference betwixt the carnal and the ſpiritual, the regenerate and unregenerate man, as betwixt Light and Darkneſs, the Living and the Dead. The regenerate ſpeaketh the Truth from his heart, the unregenerate is full of Hypocriſy and Deceit:

The

The one ſetteth God always before his eyes; the other hath him not in all his thoughts: The one walketh by Faith; the other by Sight: The one hath his eye fixed on things eternal; the other on things temporal: The one ſets his affections on things above; the other on things on earth: The one ſeeketh firſt the Kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs; the other either deceives himſelf, by a pretended purſuit, or ſeeks them not at all: The one is juſt in all his dealings, from an inward habit of Righteouſneſs; the other only ſo far as a regard to his Credit or the obligation of the Law conſtrains him: The one is Benevolent and Merciful, ready to give and forgive; the other uncharitable and unforgiving: The one concealeth his Neighbour's infirmities; the other delighteth in revealing them: The one poſſeſſes his veſſel in Sanctification and Honour; the other, if his Luſts have not left him, walloweth in all uncleanneſs: In the one Reaſon and Religion govern; in the other Appetite and Paſſion: The former knoweth the ſtate he is in, by all; the latter by any one of the characters given of him; for he that offendeth in one point, is guilty of all, and, if wilfully and habitually, without repentance he cannot be ſaved. HENCE,

HENCE, laſtly, we may diſcover wherein our higheſt excellency conſiſts, and, conſequently, what ought to be our main purſuit, it conſiſts not in being rich or great or honourable, but in being holy and juſt, and good and true; in being followers of God, as dear children; in copying after the only begotten Son of God, who went about doing good, who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth; that as by one man's diſobedience many were made ſinners: So by the obedience of one, not only in the way of imputation, but imitation alſo, many may be made righteous.

LET us then reſolve, above all things, to glorify God, by a conſtant Imitation of all his moral attributes and perfections: For this is the ſum and ſubſtance; the end and aim of all true Religion; this is our duty, this our glory; this is the way—the only way, of being wiſe unto Salvation, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON II.

SERMON II.

I. John the 3d and 4th. Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law.

THE great reaſon, why ſo many go on in an habitual courſe of Sin, without remorſe or fear, is becauſe they do not firmly believe the threatenings of God, denounced againſt it, (in the holy Scripture) and one main reaſon of their not believing thoſe threatenings againſt Sin, is their not having a juſt ſenſe of its Turpitude and Malignity; which, therefore, it ſhall be my endeavour to ſet forth in the following Diſcourſe:

THIS being premiſed, I obſerve, that to diſcover, in ſome meaſure, the Turpitude and Malignity of Sin, we might conſider it in three different Lights. Firſt, as an immanent human act. Secondly, with reſpect to its evil effects

effects and conſequences, both natural and moral. And, laſtly, with reſpect to God, as it is a Tranſgreſſion of his juſt and holy Laws.

In this laſt view, only, I ſhall now conſider it, to which I am reſtrained by the words of the Text, Sin is the Tranſgreſſion of the Law.

First. Of ſuch a Tranſgreſſion I obſerve that it is an act of the higheſt injuſtice: The thing made is the property of the Maker; and he that hath a right to the thing itſelf, muſt have a right to the uſes and ſervices of it alſo: But he who alienates any one's property from him without his conſent, is unjuſt. Now God is our Creator: It is he that hath made us, and not we ourſelves; and therefore we are not our own, but his: His juſt and equitable laws are the rules of our bounden ſervices to him. He, therefore, that tranſgreſſes the Laws of God, is directly and formally unjuſt: He alienates his Service from his Maker, without his conſent: (for God hath given to no man a Licence to Sin) yea, he doth this in manifeſt contempt of his Authority, and in oppoſition to his expreſs and poſitive Commands: He

acts

acts as if he were not God's Property: He disowns, by his disobedience, God's right in him, and employs the powers which God gave him for the advancement of his Honour, in the service of another Master, that hath no right in him: And this I take to be the reason, that Sin is so often called in Scripture "Unrighteousness."

THAT you may form a just notion of the Turpitude of Sin from this View of it, consider with yourselves, how you would resent in others an infringement of your property. If any man do us wrong by Fraud or Force, we seldom think the punishment too severe. Suppose an hired servant, fed and clothed at your expence, should, in your absence, neglect your business, or perhaps labour in the service of another Master, your professed enemy, to your great detriment and dishonour: Such base injustice would certainly provoke your highest displeasure. But how much greater the guilt of such injustice against God himself must be, I leave to your own natural sentiments to determine. If the guilt of every offence be enhanced by the dignity of the person offended;

how

how great is the guilt of an offence againſt a Being of infinite Majeſty? Every ſinner is that unjuſt ſervant I have been deſcribing, and whenever he impartially conſiders his own Iniquity, though he may plead for Mercy, yet ſurely he cannot but ſubſcribe to the juſtice of his own condemnation.

SECONDLY. Sin is not only an act of injuſtice, with reſpect to God, but of ingratitude alſo; and this is a further aggravation of its guilt: Ingratitude is that baſe diſpoſition of mind, which is ſo far from acting up to a ſenſe of benefits received, that on the contrary, it quite diſregards them all, and ſometimes acts as if it had been injured, where it hath received favours, not only not making a ſuitable return for a benefit, but actually returning Evil for Good: And this, ſurely, is one of the fouleſt Vices, that can poſſibly lodge within the heart of man. He that ſays of any one, he is ungrateful, ſays every thing that is ill of him. When you name ingratitude, I ſpeak the ſenſe of an Heathen Writer, you imply every thing that is vile. To do evil to another, that hath done us neither good nor evil, is great injuſtice;

juſtice; but to do evil in return for repeated obligations, and againſt the remonſtrances of a conſcious ſenſe of prior benefits, implies a degree of guilt, which even the Apoſtate Spirits themſelves can not ſurpaſs. There is, however, a ſtrong tincture of this vice in every act of Sin: I might have ſaid, that ſin is ingratitude, clothed with all the aggravating circumſtances that can be imagined.

INFINITE in value and number are the benefits, it hath pleaſed God in his Goodneſs to confer upon us: He at firſt formed us out of the common maſs of Earth, refined us into a human conſtitution, gave us life, and put an immortal ſpirit within us, fitted up a magnificent and beautiful world for our reception and entertainment, ſtored with every thing neceſſary to our delight or ſuſtenance, made life and happineſs the reward of innocence; and redeemed us, when fallen from that happy ſtate, by an act of boundleſs and unparalleled love: And now that we are reconciled by the blood of his only begotten Son, who laid down his life for us, his enemies. What doth he require of us, but only a ſincere obedience

to thoſe laws, which are evidently calculated to promote both our temporal and eternal welfare? Suppoſe now, that the commandments of God were only ſo many requeſts, and ſuch in the loweſt import they muſt of neceſſity be; for no one commands any thing without a deſire, that his commands ſhould be obeyed: And, indeed, though ſuch be God's right of dominion over us, that he juſtly may and doth command; yet ſuch is his goodneſs alſo, that he ſometimes condeſcends to beſeech us to be reconciled to him: Suppoſe then the divine commands to be but mere requeſts; yet upon this ſuppoſition, he who tranſgreſſeth the Law of God, doth thereby diſoblige his greateſt Benefactor, and is injurious to his beſt Friend, affronting, in every offence he commits, that gracious Being, from whom all good things do come, who gives us all things richly to enjoy. Suppoſe an earthly Potentate ſhould raiſe a beggar from the Dunghill, give him a taſte of happy life, engage to improve his happineſs every day, and aſſure him of the continuance of his favour, and of the perpetuity of that happy ſtate, in which he had placed him; if in return, this yeſterday's beggar ſhould ſo far

forget

forget himſelf, as to diſhonour his lawful Sovereign, and moſt generous Benefactor, diſobeying his reaſonable commands, though his own intereſt were concerned in his duty. Would not the world ſtand amazed at ſuch ingratitude, and all reaſonable beings agree, that the offender juſtly deſerved the ſevereſt condemnation. What then would be their ſentence, if he had been not ſeven times forgiven, but ſeventy times ſeven? To ſet the baſeneſs of ſuch ingratitude in a proper light, by another and more familiar inſtance: An indulgent father educates his ſon, with anxious care, and the moſt tender affection, preſuming that he ſhall be overpaid for all his pains, expence and care, by the grateful returns of filial affection and duty: But the ſon, inſtead of anſwering the juſt expectation of his father; affronts and diſhonours him, and lives only to conſume his eyes and grieve his heart; the puniſhment of ſuch diſobedience under the Jewiſh Law was Death.— How vaſtly greater then muſt be the demerit of ſuch ingratitude repeated, after many forgivneſſes upon pretended promiſes of reformation? Yet great as it is, the ingratitude implyed in every act of Sin againſt God, is infi-

nitely greater: He is ſtrong and patient, and ready to forgive, though he be provoked every day.

No ſooner had our firſt parents ſinned, and forfeited the divine favour both for themſelves and their poſterity; but it pleaſed God to offer terms of reconciliation, and to engage our obedience, by an offer of greater benefits, than thoſe which by our former diſobedience we had forfeited. Even to this day he endures, with much long ſuffering, the veſſels of Wrath fitted for deſtruction; and waiteth to be gracious, intending, by his long ſuffering to lead us to repentance, being not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. Well may we then expoſtulate with the ſinner in the words of Moſes to the Jews, whom God had ſo highly favoured, and ſay, Do ye thus requite the Lord, O! fooliſh people, and unwiſe? Is not he thy Father, that hath bought thee? Hath he not made thee and eſtabliſhed thee? And, in the language of the Prophet Iſaiah, call Heaven and Earth to ſtand amazed at ſuch abominable ingratitude: Hear, O! Heavens, and give ear, O! Earth, for the Lord hath ſpoken it: I have nouriſhed and brought up children, and they have rebelled againſt me!

THIRDLY,

THIRDLY. Theſe laſt words do naturally ſuggeſt to us a further aggravation of the guilt and turpitude, implyed in every act of ſin, as it is a tranſgreſſion of the divine law, I mean, that of Rebellion. He that hath a right of property in us, muſt upon the ſame foundation have alſo a right of Dominion over us; and, therefore, as God created the world and all that is therein, he muſt be the great King of all the Earth, the Governor among the nations, all mankind being the ſubjects of his dominion. The laws of reaſon and revelation are thoſe laws, by which he governs us here, and will judge us hereafter: He, therefore, that tranſgreſſeth theſe laws, plainly acts as if God had no right of dominion over him; yea, he deſpiſes and rejects the divine Authority, and, as it is ſaid in the Book of Job, he addeth rebellion unto his ſin. For this reaſon it is, that Sin is ſo often termed rebellion in holy Scripture, and the people of Iſrael, on account of their manifold offences againſt God, a moſt rebellious houſe; every act of ſin againſt him being an act of rebellion in the preciſe notion of that word. And here it may very properly be added, that the guilt of all ſin

is

is further aggravated in us Chriſtians, as it is an impious violation of thoſe moſt ſolemn engagements we entered into at our Baptiſm, and in our own perſons ratified at our Confirmation, wherein we promiſed to fight manfully under the banner of Chriſt Jeſus, the captain of our Salvation, againſt Sin, the World and the Devil; to keep God's holy Will and Commandments, and to walk in the ſame all the days of our life: Theſe engagements are virtually repeated in every act of homage, which we tender to him: And hence it follows that every ſinner under the Chriſtian covenant is, with reſpect to God, no other than a falſe and perjured Traitor. Suppoſe then, that an earthly Monarch led forth an army againſt his enemies; that a number of his ſubjects, unable to ſubſiſt without his bounty, had enliſted themſelves under his banners, took his pay and lived upon his proviſions; but when their aſſiſtance was moſt wanted, ſhould not ſo much as ſtrike one ſtroke in his defence; but on the contrary, ſhould deſert him, and employ that life and ſtrength, he had ſupported in pulling down his kingdom and ſtrengthening his adverſary's power: In this caſe I think there is little doubt,

but

but that the injured Prince, as ſoon as he came to the knowledge of the injuſtice, ingratitude, rebellion and treaſon of ſuch vile offenders, and had them in his power, would ſurely execute the ſeverity of military diſcipline upon them.

FOURTHLY, Beſides all theſe abominations there is that of Idolatry alſo in Sin. He is truly an Idolater, who ſetteth up ſomewhat that is not God in the place of God; though it be but in the heart: And this every ſinner doth, every time he offends: Whenever he tranſgreſſes the divine law, he ſuffers ſomething beſides God to preſcribe laws to him: There is ſomething, that hath more of his affection than God, ſomething, the loſs of which he dreads more, than the loſs of the divine favour. But that which a man loves, deſires, fears or puts more confidence in than God, is his God, or more properly ſpeaking, it is his Idol; yea, if it be towards himſelf, that he ſtands thus affected, he thereby makes himſelf his own Idol, and the tranſgreſſion, that proceeds from ſuch a preference, is an act of homage paid unto an Idol of his own making: For theſe reaſons covetouſneſs is expreſſly called Idolatry in the Holy Scripture;

Scripture; Mammon, the God of this World, and the Belly, the God of the Drunkard and the glutton. The Idol of Pride is ſelf; and, therefore, the Proud, who do not conſider any good thing they enjoy, as the gift of God, but aſcribe the ſucceſs of their enterprizes to their own Power or Policy, and not to the good providence of God, or at leaſt more to the former than the latter, are juſtly repreſented by the Prophet, as ſacrificing to their own net, and burning incenſe to their own Drag, plainly intimating, that ſuch perſons are guilty of Idolatry in the reaſon of the thing, and in the ſight of God.

After this manner we might go on to trace the Sin of Idolatry, mixing itſelf with every other act of ſin; but the inſtances already produced are ſufficient to evince the truth of this aſſertion, that Idolatry is an Ingredient in every tranſgreſſion of the divine Law. If now we conſider ſin in this light, it muſt needs appear more odious than in all the former. The Idolater is not only unjuſt and ungrateful towards God, not only guilty of rebelling againſt him, but of paying that honour to the Creature,

ture, that is due to the Creator only; of wreſting the Sceptre out of the hands of God, and giving it to ſome vile luſt, yea, of an actual attempt to dethrone him, ſo far as it is in his power. It is not, indeed, in the power of men or angels to diſturb God's government of the World any further, than he is pleaſed to permit: But ſurely our attempts are not the leſs criminal, becauſe they are impotent and vain. If we eſtimate the guilt of this kind of Idolatry, of which we are now ſpeaking by the manifeſtations of God's diſpleaſure againſt the groſs Idolatry of the Heathen or Jewiſh people, (and, indeed, though the latter may imply a greater ſtupidity, yet I think it cannot imply a greater depravity of mind,) we ſhall be fully convinced, that this ingredient muſt render ſin exceeding ſinful: Incenſed by this, God did devote the nations inhabiting the land of Canaan to utter deſtruction, and when his own people lapſed into the ſame abominations, he viſited their offence with the Rod, and their Sin with Scourges; diſperſed them among the Heathen, and ſcattered them in foreign lands, taking no pleaſure in his own inheritance. Idolatry in the ſenſe of Scripture, is ſpiritual Adultery; as naturally,

therefore, as the jealous Huſband ſeeks revenge; ſo ſurely will the jealouſy of God burn like fire againſt ſuch as thus diſhonour him. So ſurely will his ſoul be avenged on thoſe who ſay unto Gold, thou art my hope, and to the fine gold thou art my confidence. Lo! thus ſhall it be with thoſe, who truſt in the multitude of their riches, go aſtray after their own Idols, and ſtrengthen themſelves in their wickedneſs, of whatſoever kind it be,

Fifthly. Another ingredient in the complicated Evil of Sin is Infidelity: There is the Language of the Life and Converſation, as well as of the Heart and Mouth. Actions can ſpeak as loud as words: And of the two thoſe are the ſurer indications of the mind. It is a maxim in the civil law, that proteſtation is never to be admitted againſt Fact. It argues the deepeſt corruption, and the moſt conſummate impudence of mind to aſſert our innocence, when facts prove guilt upon us. It was well replied, what have I to do to hear your words, when I ſee your actions? To act as if things that are, were not, is the ſame thing, as talking at the ſame rate of Abſurdity. In the Hebrew

brew language acts and words go by the ſame name: If, therefore, we act as if we believed no God, we ſhall be ſuppoſed to deny his exiſtence. It will avail us little to profeſs God in words, if in works we deny him, being abominable, diſobedient, and to every good work reprobate.

" Should a Chriſtian, commanded to burn incenſe to an Heathen Deity comply! Though he added nothing of a verbal abnegation of Chriſt; yet ſurely it would be concluded, that by that very act he had denied him." Suppoſe that, having aſked ſome other man, whether he did, indeed, believe, that a juſt and holy God governed the World, he ſhould not give a direct anſwer, but immediately lead you through a ſcene of Intemperance, Lewdneſs, Profaneneſs, Fraud and Perjury: Would you think it a breach of Charity to conclude, that ſuch conduct amounted to a demonſtration of an habitual and obſtinate Infidelity? He, whoſe actions are inconſiſtent with a belief of the juſtice, holineſs and truth of God, certainly doth not believe them to be the attributes of the divine Nature, or rather by ſuch actions, he

denies the very Being of a God. So juſt are the Pſalmiſt's inferences (in the 53d and 36th Pſalms) "The fool, that is, he that is corrupt and abominable in his doings, hath ſaid in his heart, there is no God." "The tranſgreſſion of the wicked hath ſaid within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes." And may we not rationally conclude, that where the fear of God is not, there the belief of God cannot be? Thus from the contrariety of ſin to the law of God, do we rightly infer the Infidelity of the ſinner, every preſumptuous act of ſin being a practical denial of the wiſdom and goodneſs of God, from which his laws are derived, and of his Knowledge, Power, Truth, Promiſes and Threatenings, by which they are eſtabliſhed and enforced. Doth not that man in effect deny the wiſdom of God, who lives, as if he thought, God knew not how to enact ſuch laws, as are fit for man to obey? Doth not he deny the Goodneſs and Holineſs of God, who lives, as if there were ſomething in his laws, that is evil, and which of conſequence ought to be diſobeyed? And doth not he, in like manner, practically deny the Power and Truth of God, who lives, as if God neither could

could nor would perform what he hath promiſed, nor inflict what he hath threatened.

Lastly. There is yet another Malignity in Sin, ariſing from the original author of it, the Spirit, that worketh in the children of diſobedience. As the good and obedient are created after the image of God in Righteouſneſs and true Holineſs; ſo are the wicked and diſobedient formed after the image of that Apoſtate Spirit, that reigneth in them. Hence it is, that as the righteous are called the children of God, and he is pleaſed to be called their Father; ſo, likewiſe, are the wicked called the children of the Devil, and he is ſaid to be their Father. He that committeth ſin, ſaith St. John, is of the Devil, for the Devil ſinneth from the beginning. In the parable of the Sower it is ſaid of the tares, that is, of the wicked in general, that they are the children of the wicked one. As, therefore, that which is born of the fleſh, is fleſh, and that which is born of the ſpirit, is ſpirit: So there is more or leſs of the nature of that Apoſtate Spirit in every ſinner, and every act of ſin, which is not only earthly and ſenſual, but deviliſh alſo.

And now, Brethren, I ſhall leave you to judge, whether there be not an infinite, intrinſic evil and turpitude in ſin; and whether both ſin and the unrepenting ſinner muſt not of neceſſity be the objects of God's eternal averſion. Let no man, therefore, ſay of ſin, as Lot did of Zoar, Is it not a little one, and my ſoul ſhall live? For nothing can be little, wherein the Almighty is concerned: His commandment is exceeding broad, his word, his power, his wiſdom, his holineſs, his love, his anger, his juſtice, his truth, his mercy; all are great beyond our comprehenſion. Infinity or immenſity join themſelves to all our ideas concerning him; and, therefore, ſin, which is an offence againſt his Majeſty, can never be ſo ſmall a matter, as too many ſeem to think, nor would God have denounced ſuch dreadful vengeance againſt it, if it were. Let us now conſider the inferences deducible from what has been ſaid. If ſin implies injuſtice, ingratitude, rebellion, treaſon, idolatry, and atheiſm, if ſin be the work, and ſinners the children of the Devil; then who ſhall doubt the certainty, or queſtion the juſtice of thoſe eternal puniſhments, which God hath denounced againſt the

workers

workers of iniquity? If ſuch be the nature of ſin, what wonder is it, that it ſhould be attended with ſuch dreadful conſequences and effects, both temporal and eternal, or that ſuch as go on ſtill in their wickedneſs, ſhould be puniſhed with everlaſting deſtruction from the preſence of the Lord, and from the glory of of his power! When the Lord Jeſus ſhall be revealed from Heaven, with his mighty Angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that they obey not the Goſpel of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt! When we reflect ſeriouſly upon the turpitude of ſin, we have no reaſon to wonder that God ſhould be ſo greatly offended at it, or that wrath, incenſed, ſhould prepare a Hell for the ſinner. For ſin being what it is, it is impoſſible God ſhould behold it without indignation, unleſs we ſhould ſuppoſe him, as little concerned for his own glory and the welfare of his creatures, as the ſinnner himſelf is. Let it alſo be conſidered, that if we be rejected in the great Day of Judgment, a reflection on that happineſs we have deſpiſed, will alone be for ever after an inſufferable torment to us; and to find ourſelves not only excluded Heaven, but without the leaſt

leaſt glimpſe of hope of ever changing our loſt condition into a better, will be Hell enough, if there was no other. The complaint our Saviour expreſſed under his ſufferings on the Croſs, and when the agonies of death were upon him, was only this, 'My God! My God! Why haſt thou forſaken me.' An everlaſting Hell is the natural and neceſſary conſequence of our being for ever alienated from God, and abandoned by him. So that ſhould that ſentence of the laſt day only fix and confirm that ſtate, to which ſin has reduced the unhappy ſinner, i. e. caſt him for ever out of the favour and preſence of God, this muſt be a Hell, indeed, and if ſinners raiſed again, muſt be immortal, an eternal one. To all intelligent beings God is the only proper center of their reſt, and you may as well expect an heavy body raiſed up into the air, and then let go, to remain there, as that a ſoul ſeparated from God, ſhould ever be at reſt. What can he have to enjoy, whom God hath forſaken, and baniſhed from his preſence? God is the fountain of all good: When he retires and draws in his beams, nothing but miſery and darkneſs can ſtay behind; health and peace, virtue and pleaſure withdraw

withdraw along with him: Of what kind and how great in degree may be the poſitive puniſhment inflicted on obſtinate ſinners, God only knows; but this we know, that in this ſtate the wicked, impenitent ſinner, muſt remain to all eternity. For all this muſt be the natural conſequence of being caſt out for ever from the preſence of God, and abandoned by him. In ſhort, Hell is the natural conſequence of ſin, without repentance and reformation, which being the effect of our own choice alſo. God may judicially inflict what further puniſhments he thinks fit: He hath ſet life and death before us, and if we chuſe death, God may well upbraid us in the words of the Prophet, "O Iſrael! thy deſtruction is of thyſelf."

As, therefore, we may hence diſcern the juſtice of the future eternal puniſhment of the wicked, let us learn to believe the certainty of it; for it is true, and he, that can neither deceive nor be deceived, hath ſpoken it; That the wicked ſhall go away into everlaſting puniſhment, but the righteous into life eternal. Hence, ſecondly, we may learn, how we ought to ſtand affected towards all and every

ſin; that we ought to deteſt and utterly abhor it, for ſurely it is an accurſed thing, not only infinitely vile in its own nature, and with reſpect to God; but with reſpect to us it is the greateſt evil, next to the puniſhment which God hath appointed to it; and conſequently ought to be to us the object of an irreconcilable hatred and averſion. Should any one charge us with the guilt of injuſtice, ingratitude or falſehood, with reſpect to our neighbour, of treaſon and rebellion againſt our lawful Sovereign: Should they reproach us with the opprobrious names of infidels, children of Hell and the Devil: How would ſuch uſage fire our reſentment? And ſhall not the reproaches of our own conſciences, juſtly charging us with the guilt of all thoſe foul offences againſt God, work either upon our ingenuity or our fear; and raiſe in us a holy indignation againſt ourſelves? The want of theſe affections, if there were no other argument, might convince us of our infidelity. We are all ready enough to declare our abhorrence of Idolatry. Let us not then fall down and worſhip the idols of our own creation, as the covetous and ambitious, the drunkard and the glutton, the lewd, the unclean, the proud,

and,

and, indeed, every other ſinner doth. For this, ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean, nor covetous, nor otherwiſe unrighteous perſon hath any inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of God. For, becauſe of theſe things cometh the wrath of God on the children of diſobedience.

HENCE, laſtly, we may perceive the neceſſity of ſuch a ſacrifice for the expiation of ſin, as in the goſpel is exhibited to us. For if the guilt of every ſin be great beyond conception; what other ſacrifice leſs than that of the death of the only begotten Son of God, could be ſufficient for the expiation of the ſins of all mankind? In him only, therefore, have we obtained, or, indeed, could we obtain redemption, that is, the remiſſion of our ſins, through faith in his blood, being accepted only in the beloved. To Him, therefore, with the Father and Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, all Glory and Majeſty, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore. *Amen.*

SERMON III.

Eccles. viii. *and* 11. *Becauſe Sentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily; therefore the Heart of the Sons of Men is fully ſet in them to do evil.*

AS the Laws of God have annexed a penalty to every evil work; ſo likewiſe have the Laws of Men to ſuch as fall within the cognizance of the civil Magiſtrate: Theſe penalties are the ſanctions both of divine and human laws. The words, therefore, may be conſidered, either as they refer to God or to the civil Magiſtrate: When legal penalties are not ſeaſonably inflicted by the latter, the evil effects are ſoon very ſenſibly perceived in the growing impudence of vice and immorality; impunity being the greateſt encouragement to wickedneſs. It, therefore, highly concerns every magiſtrate to conſider well the end of his appointment, and

to

to remember, that God will exact a ſtrict account of the uſe of that power and authority, which he hath lodged in his hands: If through fear or favour, indolence or want of zeal for God's honour, he ſuffered the wicked to go unpuniſhed, he will be accounted an unprofitable ſervant. If he bear the ſword of human juſtice in vain, the ſword of divine juſtice will be turned againſt himſelf; the iniquity and impiety, which owed their increaſe to his omiſſion of his duty, the diſhonour done to God, and the injuries done to innocent perſons, owing to the impunity of open and obſtinate offenders, whom it was his proper buſineſs to correct and reſtrain, will be placed to his account, and accumulate his guilt, when the great and terrible day of the Lord cometh: And then will be verified that juſt obſervation of the wiſe man, verſe the 9th, "There is a time when one man ruleth over another to his own hurt."

But it is not my deſign at preſent, to conſider the words as they refer to the adminiſtration of juſtice by Men, but God, who, although he hath denounced the ſentence of death againſt all unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs of men; yet

yet often delays to put that ſentence in execution, his mercy for a time arreſting his avenging arm, and preventing the effuſions of his wrath: He endures, with much long ſuffering, even the veſſels of wrath fitted for deſtruction: How much more thoſe, who only through infirmity, ſurpriſe, or the violence of temptation do ſin againſt him: Should he for ever exclude a ſinner from a poſſibility of reconciliation for the firſt offence; yet muſt he be juſtified. But although not only ſtrict juſtice call for the execution of the ſentence; but even mercy itſelf ſeems to have nothing to plead in behalf of a ſinner, yet God often lengthens out his patience: Though he have long expected fruit from his vineyard in vain; yet will he not ſuffer the wall to be broken down. We meet with many inſtances of God's forbearance in holy ſcripture, after many mercies vouchſafed and ill requited, many convictions of conſcience diſregarded, many warnings given and threatenings denounced, to no purpoſe: If ten righteous perſons had been found in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, they had not ſuffered the vengeance of that fire, which utterly conſumed them: Yea, when the Lord of the vineyard had ſent his only

Son,

Son, and thoſe wicked murderers, the Jews, had killed the Prince of Life, imprecating the vengeance of God upon their own guilty heads; yet full forty years were expired, before the ſignal deſtruction of that wicked generation: Thus is the Almighty ſtrong in patience, though he be provoked every day, exerciſing much long ſuffering towards the ſinful ſons of men. But though God be ſo very patient towards ſinners in general, yet doth he ſometimes make bare his arm in the deſtruction of daring offenders, and prove, by terrible demonſtration, that there is a God that judgeth in the earth, who is not, as the Epicureans imagined, an idle and unconcerned ſpectator of human affairs. But this is his ſtrange work, and theſe inſtances of ſpeedy vengeance are ſo very rare, that they make but little impreſſion upon the minds of wicked and ungodly men.

It is the deſign of God's patience to lead men to repentance, by giving them time to conſider their folly and reform; but theſe men of whom we are now ſpeaking, defeat the gracious deſign of his Providence, and impiouſly pervert all the offers of grace, and happy opportunities

portunities of converſion into occaſions and motives to further impiety: The medicines that ſhould work a cure, ſtrengthening the diſeaſe: This is the abuſe intimated in thoſe words, Becauſe ſentence againſt an evil work is not executed ſpeedily; therefore, the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil. And this abuſe (the prevention of which is the deſign of the enſuing diſcourſe) proceeds either from want of conſideration, or from concluſions drawn from principles, that will not ſupport them. And, Firſt, there are ſome, who, neither diſbelieving the being nor the providence of God, nor forming to themſelves any unworthy notions of him, do, notwithſtanding, encourage themſelves in ſin; becauſe God delays to puniſh them: And this can be aſcribed to nothing, but want of conſideration. The pleaſures of ſin, and the profit or honour that may be gained by it, being preſent, but the puniſhment future and at a diſtance, they eagerly gather the forbidden fruit, that with a tempting outſide hangs in view, not at all attending to the future evil conſequences of ſo doing. It may be ſufficient to prevent this abuſe to put men in mind, that they will certainly

tainly think the preſent pleaſure, profit, or honour too dearly purchaſed, whenever the deſerved puniſhment overtakes them; that things preſent are poſting away from us, and things future with equal ſpeed approaching; that our preſent ſtate is of a ſhort duration; but our future condition, be it happy or miſerable, eternal; and that whenſoever that infamy and pain, which are the ſure conſequences of ſin, ſhall fall upon any man, he will not fail to reflect upon his own folly, and ſay, What fruit had I then in thoſe things, whereof I am now aſhamed, and for which I am now tormented? Every wiſe man, therefore, will have an equal regard to a future, as to a preſent time or moment; and, by putting the future pain or loſs in the oppoſite ſcale to the preſent pleaſure, profit or honour, will never ſuffer them to determine him to ſin and make himſelf obnoxious to God's Diſpleaſure.

Secondly. But my principal deſign is to expoſe the folly of thoſe, who by falſe reaſonings upon the patience and forbearance of God towards ſinners, encourage themſelves in their iniquity. Some of theſe are collected to our

hands by an Heathen Moraliſt, and may be thus expreſſed: The procraſtination of the puniſhment of the wicked proves the ſupreme Being to be but an idle and unconcerned ſpectator of human affairs; for if he did at all concern himſelf with the government of the world, it would ill become this ſupreme Governor to be remiſs in any thing; but eſpecially in the puniſhment of wicked men, when it is conſidered, how bold and active they are in tranſgreſſing his laws and doing miſchief: Either, therefore, ſay they, he doth not concern himſelf with human affairs at all, or elſe by being ſlow in taking vengeance, he acts in ſuch a manner, as doth not well become the power and energy of the divine nature. In anſwer to this objection I obſerve, that men are very often greatly miſtaken in their judgments of theſe things, and fancy a man happy, when he is moſt miſerable. There are many wicked men in the world, that are ſurrounded with a numerous family and attendance, ſplendid in the pomp of Magiſtracy and illuſtrious for the greatneſs of their wealth and power, whoſe puniſhment, though perhaps even now ſcarce tolerable, never diſplays itſelf until the final cataſtrophe. We generally look upon

upon the laſt item, as if it were the whole of the puniſhment, and leave out of our account, the frightful apprehenſions, commotions and pangs of remorſe, with which every malefactor is tormented. A wicked man is, for the moſt part, bold and fearleſs, until luſt hath conceived and brought forth ſin; but then the paſſion growing calm and weak, the mind ſurrenders itſelf to a thouſand conſcious fears and inward reproaches. It is well obſerved by Seneca, that he, who looks diligently into the ſtate of a wicked man, may ſee the canker at his heart through all the dazzling ſplendor of wealth and greatneſs. So that many a wicked man feels the divine vengeance heavy upon him, when an unconcerned ſpectator imagines he hath eſcaped the puniſhment due to his crimes; and, therefore, the juſtice of God is not ſo remiſs as to outward appearance it may ſeem: But this anſwer may perhaps be thought inſufficient to remove the objection, becauſe it is poſſible, ſome wicked men may not be much affected by conſcious fears, or inward ſhame, or any other ſecret torture: Be it ſo, yet God cannot be ſaid to be remiſs in taking vengeance, unleſs the puniſhment be deferred beyond the proper

ſeaſon: If the time, when he inflicts puniſhment, be the moſt proper; then it is not remiſſneſs, but wiſdom to defer it to that time: If it be thought by ſome to argue remiſſneſs to deſer the puniſhment of an offender for a ſhort time, to others it would look like rage and fury to drag him out immediately to execution.

But here the Epicureans' ſecond objection comes properly to be conſidered; (the ſubſtance of which is as follows): That vengeance, ſay they, would certainly be moſt ſeaſonable, which immediately followed the offence: It would be moſt comfortable to an innocent ſufferer to ſee the unjuſt oppreſſor, immediately ſuffering the penalty due to the wrongs he had done. The ſpeedy execution of the ſentence againſt evil works, would moſt effectually ſuppreſs them. The hand of God, the juſtice of his proceedings, and the interpoſition of his providence, would be more viſible, than now they are. When as ſoon as a man hath offended, he feels the hand of juſtice heavy upon him, he immediately imputes his puniſhment to his iniquity; but when he hath almoſt forgotten the crime, before he feels the ſmart of the puniſhment inflicted

flicted for it, he aſcribes his calamity to chance, or to his own miſconduct, or other ſecondary cauſe, rather than to the diſpenſations of a wiſe and juſt Providence; and, therefore, he doth not repent of his ſins, becauſe he doth not look upon them, as the occaſions of his ſufferings: And thus the divine judgments are obſcured, and the dread of doing evil rendered uſeleſs and ineffectual. Whereas, on the contrary, were the firſt attempts of wicked men repreſſed by immediate ſeverity, they would be immediately ſtruck with a ſenſe of their folly, and with an awful dread of the divine Majeſty, which they found with a watchful eye, beholding the actions of men, and inſtantly puniſhing them, as they deſerved: But if better reaſons can be aſſigned for God's forbearance, than theſe are for the immediate effuſions of his wrath, this objection comes to nothing: Theſe will be enumerated hereafter. I ſhall, therefore, only obſerve by way of anſwer to it in this place, that if ten or twenty years intervene between a man's crime and his puniſhment, we are apt to look on this, as a long reprieve; and neither other men, nor perhaps the offender himſelf thinks that to be the puniſhment of his crime

crime which came halting after it with ſo ſlow a pace; but then we conſider not, that every diſtance and diſtinction of time is as nothing in reſpect of Eternity, in compariſon of which one day is as a thouſand years, and a thouſand years as one day. When, therefore, we think God ſlack or remiſs in the execution of the ſentence againſt an evil work, we judge of him, not as he is in himſelf, but as if he were one of us, who poſſibly could have no other opportunity of puniſhing the obſtinate offender, if he did not make uſe of the preſent. We conſider not, that how long ſoever the execution of the ſentence againſt evil works is deferred, there is yet time enough for a ſufficiency of puniſhment remaining, here, or at leaſt hereafter. It is a juſt remark of Cæſar's, that the Gods were wont to grant to wicked men a greater ſhare of proſperity, and a longer impunity, that the fatal change might be the more grievous and more viſible, when it came. The ſuſpenſion of a judgment is often overbalanced by the weight and ſeverity of it, when it overtakes the criminal in the midſt of his ſecurity, doubled like a debt, that hath been long forborn, by the encreaſing intereſt. But beſides thoſe who

who thus deceive themſelves, there are others, who make the patience of God an argument againſt his knowledge, as if they reaſoned thus: We have hitherto boldly bid defiance to the Almighty, as yet we have not found, that he taketh any notice of our provocations; why ſhould we not then conclude, that, indeed, he hath no knowledge of them, (that he can not judge through the dark cloud) and that thick clouds are a covering to him, that he ſeeth not: But this objection is trifling, ſince for the reaſons already and hereafter to be mentioned, God may know our offences, and yet conſiſtently with his wiſdom and his juſtice for a time forbear to puniſh them: The ſame anſwer may be given to thoſe, who make God's patience an argument againſt his Holineſs, concluding from his ſilence, that he approves, and is conſenting to all their acts of wickedneſs: Of ſuch as theſe, the Pſalmiſt ſpeaks in the perſon of God in the 50th Pſalm. "Theſe things haſt thou done, and I kept ſilence; and thou thoughteſt that I was altogether ſuch a-one as thyſelf; but I will reprove thee, and ſet them in order before thine eyes. Now conſider this, ye that forget God, leaſt I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver."

FORBEARANCE is not forgiveneſs, neither is a reprieve a pardon. And this may ſerve to expoſe the folly and preſumption of ſuch, as from their preſent infer their future impunity; and, therefore, ſcoff at all predictions of future judgments, and ſay, let him make ſpeed and haſten his work, that we may ſee it: Where is the promiſe of his coming? For, ſince the Fathers fell aſleep, all thing continue, as they were from the beginning of the Creation: As thoſe unbelieving Jews, who, from the long ſuffering of God, were tempted to queſtion his veracity, were convinced of their error, when it was too late; ſo there is no doubt, but that they will ſhare in the ſame fate, who follow their example. Laſtly, there are others, that are greatly ſcandalized at the proſperity of many wicked, and adverſity of many righteous perſons; and not being able to reconcile the promiſcuous events of things with the notion of a righteous judge, they conclude that the world is now left to ſhift for itſelf, and that they cannot act more wiſely, than by walking in thoſe ways that lead to a falſe happineſs and preſent pleaſure: Thus God is in ſome ſort a ſufferer by his patience, and many are tempted to diſbelieve

diſbelieve his dominion of the world; becauſe for a long time they have not perceived him to be incenſed againſt it, for the wickedneſs thereof: But theſe men conſider not, that there is another life after this, that God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteouſneſs by that man, whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given aſſurance unto all men, in that he hath raiſed him from the dead.

If it were the deſign of Almighty God, only to preſerve the peace and order of this world, without any regard to the manifeſtation of the Glory of his juſtice in a life after this; then if his judgments were ſo dilatory, as not to reſtrain vice with effect, he might be accounted remiſs and unwiſe in his adminiſtration. The unequal diſtributions of temporal good and evil might juſtly tempt us to believe, that either he took no care of this ſublunary world, or that he wanted knowledge of men's offences, or power or will to puniſh them: But when men are tempted to entertain ſuch diſhonourable notions of God, they forget, that we are only ſent into this world upon trial, and that the full and ade-

quate reward and puniſhment of our good or evil actions is reſerved for the next: Let us, therefore, argue upon this ſuppoſition, and we ſhall ſoon ſee the miſts of infidelity diſperſing and vaniſhing away.

It might poſſibly afford ſome comfort to the good and virtuous to ſee the injuries they ſuffer, immediately revenged upon thoſe that do them; but, ſurely, the proſpect of the future recompenſe of their patient perſeverance in well doing, under all the perſecutions of wicked and ungodly men, muſt be much more comfortable. Is it not ſufficient to turn our fretting againſt evil doers into compaſſion, to conſider the eternal vengeance that awaits them? If the little difference that appears in the diſpenſations of providence towards the juſt and unjuſt in this life, give offence to ſuch as do not extend their views beyond the grave; yet, ſurely, the conſideration that God hath reſerved the full revelation of his righteous judgment to another ſtate of things, muſt remove the doubts, and ſettle the faith of ſuch as do not wilfully ſhut their eyes againſt the clear light of the Goſpel.

If ſome men are tempted to call in queſtion the infinite Purity and Holineſs of the Divine Nature, by reaſon of his beholding iniquity with impunity ſo long, as ſometimes he doth; it is ſufficient to remove the jealouſies of ſuch men, to aſſure them, that God will not fail to be avenged on thoſe that reject his authority, when they have filled up the meaſure of their iniquity. A certain Heathen Writer, having obſerved the exemplary deſtruction of a notorious oppreſſor in his time, did confidently declare, that that ſingle event had acquitted the Gods of that partiality and indolence, which ſome had unjuſtly charged them with. With how much greater confidence would he have done this, if he could have comprehended the whole ſcene of divine juſtice, both in this life and that which is to come. If he had gone into the ſanctuary, and there conſidered the fearful end of ſuch men? And thus we proceed.

Thirdly. To point out ſome of the true reaſons of God's ſuſpending for a time the execution of the ſentence againſt evil works: And, firſt, It may be one reaſon of his preſent patience, that he may, by that means, preſerve the

race of mankind and the freedom of human actions, one or both of which, would be deſtroyed by immediate vengeance: For the conſequences of an immediate execution are ſuch, that the Epicurean himſelf, if he will but conſider them, muſt certainly give up his argument, and own, that God is wiſe and good in his forbearance and long ſuffering. For, ſuppoſe the evil work were no ſooner committed, but the ſentence againſt it were put in execution; then ſince the puniſhment of all offences againſt God without repentance, (for which, upon the preſent ſuppoſition, there could be no place,) is death temporal and eternal; the neceſſary conſequence would be that all mankind muſt inevitably periſh, ſince there is no man that liveth and ſinneth not. If God ſhould be ſo extremely ſevere in marking what we do amiſs, there is no man living could abide it.— If God ſhould thus contend with us, and be always wroth, the ſpirits ſhould fail before him, and the ſouls which he hath made. Suppoſe then that God ſhould puniſh us immediately upon the commiſſion of any crime, not with death, but only with ſuch ſeverity, as might be neceſſary to the effectual reſtraint of

ſin:

ſin: In this caſe it is evident, that men would not do good, or forbear to do evil, from a principle of virtue, but of ſervile fear; being neceſſarily determined to obedience by ſuch immediate vengeance. For no man in his right mind would commit ſin, if he found ſuffering inſeparable from it: In this caſe, there would be no free choice, no room for probation, puniſhment or reward. Faith would have no ſphere of action, nor hope any object in reverſion. Our proſpect muſt neceſſarily terminate with this life, whether we conſidered the nature of our actions, or of the rewards and puniſhments annexed to them; thoſe being forced, not free; theſe preſent and temporal, not future and eternal. So that the former ſuppoſition is inconſiſtent with the life and being; the latter, with the liberty of man, and all thoſe virtues, that through the goodneſs of God entitled him to a ſure reward: And, therefore, the patience and forbearance of Almighty God, are far from being inconſiſtent with his wiſdom. Secondly, Another reaſon may be, to teach mankind to live by faith, and not by ſenſe only. We do, in the moſt acceptable manner, give glory to God, when we act upon a full perſuaſion,

ſuaſion, that he is infinitely juſt and good, though for a time we may not perceive any extraordinary manifeſtations of thoſe his attributes. If God ſhould ſmite as ſoon as we tranſgreſs, there would be no room for the exerciſe of Faith; this being the glory which Faith gives unto God, that though the workers of wickedneſs be ſet up, yet it is perſuaded, that he ſits above; obſerves what paſſes here below, and hath a day of reckoning in reſerve; that though he holds his peace, yet in the day of his anger he will moſt certainly viſit their ſins upon them. Thirdly, We ſay, that God doth oft ſuſpend his judgments for the manifeſtation of his own patience. All men, yea, ſinners themſelves, though not as ſinners, are the work of his own hands, which he doth not upon every ſlight provocation utterly forſake. He is ſlow to anger, becauſe he knows our frame, and remembers that we are but duſt. The divine juſtice will not be made fully manifeſt to all the world, until the great and terrible day of the Lord cometh: Now we ſee only ſome faint outlines of it, but then it will appear in full proportion; in the mean time his patience muſt have its perfect work: This is the attri-

bute,

bute, in which he ſeems to glory, ſtyling himſelf the God of patience, the Lord ſlow to wrath, who, for his name's ſake, defers his anger and for his praiſe refrains it. What wonder is it then, that God ſhould be ſtrong in patience, though he be provoked every day, when it is conſidered, that this life is the proper, and, indeed, the only time for the exerciſe of this attribute? For as the tree falls, it muſt lie, and there is no repentance in the grave. And thus we are naturally led to a Fourth Reaſon for the reſpite of a ſinner's puniſhment, viz. That he may have time and opportunity to repent. Deſpiſeſt thou, ſaith St. Paul, Rom. the 2d and 4th, the riches of his goodneſs and forbearance, and long ſuffering, not knowing that the goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance? And again 2 Peter, 3, 9 and 15. The Lord is not ſlack concerning his promiſe, as ſome men count ſlackneſs; but long ſuffering to-us-ward not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. Account ye, ſaith the ſame Apoſtle, that the long ſuffering of our Lord is Salvation, i. e. intends the Salvation of ſinners, by affording them opportunities of repentance.

But

But where would be a poſſibility of repentance or ſalvation, if deſtruction were the immediate conſequence of ſin. God doth, therefore, thus bear with ſinners out of love and pity, either to themſelves or thoſe that would be affected by their fall, which is a further argument for the ſuſpenſion of his judgments.

The intereſts of men are often ſo interwoven with each other, that the good muſt neceſſarily be involved in the ſufferings of the bad. If a good and a bad man ſail both in the ſame veſſel, it is impoſſible, that the ſame wind, which is adverſe to the one, ſhould not be againſt the other alſo: And it is God's will, that the wicked ſhould rather fare the better for the good, than the good, the worſe for the wicked. That this is ſometimes the motive to the ſuſpenſion of divine judgments, we are taught by our Saviour, in a moſt inſtructive parable. Matt. the 13th and 24th. Where we find the ſervants, who were for gathering up the tares immediately, reſtrained by the houſeholder, with this reaſon aſſigned: Leaſt whilſt they gathered up the tares, they ſhould root up the wheat alſo with them; both are, therefore, ſuffered to

grow

grow together, until the harveſt, and then the reapers are directed to gather, firſt the tares and to bind them in bundles to be burnt, but to gather the wheat into his barn. Therefore, as the tares are gathered and burnt in the fire, ſo ſhall it be in the end of the world: The ſon of man ſhall ſend forth his angels, and they ſhall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and ſhall caſt them into a furnace of fire; there ſhall be wailing and gnaſhing of teeth. Fifthly, It being both our duty and our intereſt to imitate God in all his moral perfections, he doth not immediately puniſh ſuch as ſin againſt him; not that he is liable to error or repentance, ſhould he accelerate his indignation; but to excite in us the like forbearance and long ſuffering towards each other; to extirpate that brutal and eager deſire of revenge, that reigns too much in mortal breaſts; and to teach us, that we ought not, in the heat of rage and fury, when our anger hath blinded our underſtanding, and uſurped the dominion of reaſon, to fall upon ſuch as have offended us, and contract the guilt of doing them a greater injury than they have done to us; but wait with patience until reaſon hath

recovered its power, and we are ſure our conduct will be ſuch, as ſhall be juſtifiable, both in the ſight of God and Man. When, therefore, we thus behold Almighty God, who cannot apprehend any ill conſequences from an immediate expreſſion of his reſentment, deferring, nevertheleſs, the puniſhment of ſuch as ſin againſt him, to a future time, we ought to look upon that forbearance and long ſuffering (of which God himſelf affords us ſuch a bright example) as a divine virtue, and think it our duty to go and do likewiſe: And if we do not, how juſtly may we fear, that to our great confuſion, he will one day expoſtulate with us, and ſay, O thou wicked ſervant! Shouldeſt not thou have had compaſſion on thy fellow-ſervant, even as I had pity on the?

THUS I have aſſigned ſome of thoſe motives, which I conceive, do induce the Almighty to bear with us, though we do every day provoke him: Theſe are not want of evidence; for he ſees clearly into every particular inſtance of our conduct, and can and will be a ſwift witneſs againſt us; not want of power; the weakneſs of God is ſtronger than man; there is no reſcuing

cuing a ſinner out of his hands; he is ſtrong as well as patient; and though hand join in hand, yet ſhall not the wicked go unpuniſhed. God is a righteous Judge, ſtrong and patient, and God is provoked every day; but if a man will not turn, he will whet his ſword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready: He hath alſo prepared for him the inſtruments of death. Pſalms the 7th, 12th and 13th. Nor want of Holineſs or zeal; for the Lord our God is holy, he hateth all the workers of iniquity with a perfect hatred. Lukewarmneſs is a defect in man, and, therefore, there can be no ſuch imperfection in God. When once wicked men have ſhewn themſelves impaſſive to the divine favours, and filled up the meaſure of their iniquity; then will the wrath of God ſmoke out againſt them; then doth he put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and is clad with zeal as with a cloak; and, according to their deeds, he will repay fury to his adverſaries, recompenſe to his enemies. Then will his anger be accompliſhed, and he will cauſe his fury to reſt upon them, and will be comforted, and they ſhall know, that he the Lord hath ſpoken it in his zeal, when he hath accompliſhed his fury in

them. Iſai. 59th and 17th. Ezck. the 5th and 13th. Though juſtice be ſometimes ſlow paced, as it may ſeem to a mere human judgment; yet is it ſtill purſuing, and its progreſs being conſtant, it muſt neceſſarily overtake the ſinner at the laſt. He, therefore, that goes on to ſin, with ſecurity, becauſe of his preſent impunity, will find in the end, that his judgment of a long time lingered not, and that his damnation ſlumbered not; but that after his hardneſs, and impenitent heart, he hath treaſured up unto himſelf wrath againſt the day of wrath, the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds.

SEEING then that it is not want of power, knowledge, wiſdom, juſtice, holineſs or zeal, that is the cauſe of God's ſuſpenſion of his judgments, or the reaſon that the ſentence againſt evil works is not executed ſpeedily; but ſome or other of thoſe motives that we have aſſigned, and perhaps there may be many more, and better, than the wit of man can find out, it follows plainly that God's forbearance and long ſuffering can neither be an encouragement

to

to vice, nor diſcouragement to virtue: Let no man, therefore, think himſelf the more ſafe in the proſecution of his evil deſigns, or the gratification of his unlawful luſts, on account of his preſent exemption from puniſhment: But let us at all times keep our eyes attentively fixed not only upon the promiſes made to us in holy ſcripture; but alſo the threatenings therein denounced againſt ſin: Let us alſo carefully attend to the natural forebodings of our own conſciences, which do exactly correſpond with the revelation, God hath been pleaſed to make concerning the rewards and puniſhments of another life, that we may inherit the one and avoid the other, by ſuffering the patience and goodneſs of God to lead us to repentance, and by being diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without ſpot, and blameleſs, looking for and haſting unto the coming of the day of God, in which the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the elements ſhall melt with fervent heat; the earth alſo and the works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. For the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; and though we ourſelves may be diſſolved before the general diſſolution of all things; yet

if

if we be ſurpriſed in our ſins, when death cometh upon us, our caſe will be the very ſame, as if both we and the world were diſſolved at one and the ſame moment. What manner of perſons then ought we to be in all holy converſation and Godlineſs, uſing all diligence to make our calling and election ſure, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord—To whom, with God the Father and the Holy Ghoſt, be rendered and aſcribed Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON IV.

SERMON IV.

Exod. Chap. xxiii. *Ver.* 2.—*Thou ſhalt not follow a Multitude to do evil.*

THE Hebrew Word (רַבִּים) which we tranſlate multitude, ſignifies not only many in number, but alſo ſuch as are great in Power, Honour, Knowledge, Wealth or Fame.—If, therefore, we take the Text in it's full Latitude, it imports, that we ought not to do evil, though many Perſons, and they not of the meaneſt Quality, ſhould countenance the doing of it by their Example: yea, that neither the number, nor power, nor other eminent qualities of offenders, ſhould be ſuffered to tempt us to be partakers with them in their evil Deeds, nor can juſtify us in ſo doing. This is a moſt neceſſary and uſeful Caution; for we very often find Example prevailing over Advice or Command, Intereſt or Duty, Promiſes or Threatenings.—Yea, the

the ſanctions of temporal and eternal Rewards or Puniſhments are Barriers too weak to ſtop the inroads of a faſhionable Vice. The ſingle Example of a private Perſon often draws many a ſide into the commiſſion of very great crimes. How much greater muſt the Influence of the Example be, when it is ſupported by Number and Quality? It ſhall be my Buſineſs therefore in the following Diſcourſe:

FIRST, To enquire how it comes to paſs, that the Examples of other Men, eſpecially if they be many and of Diſtinction, are ſuch prevalent Temptations to Sin; and,

SECONDLY, To ſhew the Folly and Danger of being ſo tempted.—As to the firſt I take the natural proneneſs of mankind to Imitation to be the principal Cauſe of the great Influence of Example. We are born in a ſtate of Ignorance, and as ſoon as we begin to make Obſervations upon the Actions of thoſe, that came into the World before us, we are very apt to conclude, that what others do, may lawfully be done by us. We daily ſee this Principle operating early, and confirming it's Power by the repeated Effects

fects of it. When we have no other Guide but our Senſes, it is very natural for us to follow them. This Propenſity, were it not for the general corruption of manners, and the iniquity, that every where abounds, would be of great Service to the Intereſts of Religion and Virtue; but that Principle, which our wiſe Creator deſigned to be the handmaid to them both, is by this means perverted into an inſtrument of Vice and Ungodlineſs. And no wonder if the power of that propenſity be very ſtrong indeed, which is ſupported by nature, habit, and an appearance of reaſon, or that it ſhould long retain its influence, even after reaſon hath begun to remonſtrate againſt its tyranny. This power of example, and the ſource from which it flows, is well deſcribed by the Roman Satyriſt; from whom I have taken the following extracts:

THERE are many things of a moſt vile and ſcandalous nature, which parents, by their evil example, tranſmit to their unhappy children. The mimic child delights to act its parents' vices. There is but little room to hope for temperance in that youth, who has paſſed his ſeventh year in learning delicacy of taſte from

his luxurious father. Place him under the diſcipline of a thouſand philoſophers of one ſect, and as many of another, yet ſtill he will be a ſlave to appetite, importunately long for dainty food, and be a gueſt at every feaſt. He doth not ſeem to think, that ſlaves are made of the ſame materials with himſelf, nor doth he inculcate clemency and moderation, but inſolence and cruelty; who rejoices in the muſic of the ſcourge, and thinks no Syren's ſong ſo ſweet. Vain are the hopes of the adultreſs, if ſhe thinks her daughter will not imitate her in thoſe crimes, which ſhe hath not concealed from her. Nature counteracts her expectations; domeſtic examples of vice do the more immediately and effectually corrupt the mind, when they enter it under the influence of ſuch authority. Some few exceptions, indeed, may poſſibly be found in the experience of an age; but the generality follow thoſe foot-ſteps, which they ought to fly, inclining to that track, which hath been long marked out. You will find in every country perſons enow, emulous of vicious examples, but few of virtuous ones. Let nothing, therefore, that is unſeemly, either to be ſaid or done, enter within thoſe walls, where but a ſingle

youth reſides. As great a reverence is due to him, as to a veſtal Virgin, or that character, which we hold moſt ſacred. Let all parents, therefore, abſtain from every evil act in the preſence of their children, leaſt, otherwiſe, they owe their vices and their ruin to thoſe very perſons, to whom they owe their exiſtence. Hence you may perceive, how early example produces imitation, either before reaſon begins to act, or countenanced by it afterwards; and frequent acts of imitation will beget an habit, often found too ſtrong for reaſon more mature, for philoſophy and laws, and ſometimes for religion too, with all its threatened puniſhments and promiſed rewards. The generality ſet themſelves to learn only what others do, that they may imitate and follow them. They ſtudy the cuſtoms and faſhions of the world, not with a deſign to examine them by the rules of Reaſon and Religion, but that they may conform their conduct to them. The trouble of conſidering well the nature and tendency of our actions being for the moſt part irkſome, we eaſily ſatisfy ourſelves with our own proceedings, if we ſee others in the ſame courſe; and finding a beaten track, we go on in it, without enquiring whither

it tends; and ſo are in the greateſt danger of walking in that broad way that leads to deſtruction. So ſtrong a temptation it is to do this or that thing, barely to have ſeen it done by another, and ſtill the greater the number of them that do wickedly is, and the more eminent they are, the more powerful muſt the temptation be.

ANOTHER reaſon of the prevailing influence of evil example is, becauſe the two moſt natural reſtraints from ſin, ſhame and fear, are by this means, either much weakened, or entirely taken away. Every ſin is in its own nature vile and ſhameful, and corrupt as the world is grown, there are yet many vices, the bare mention of which will fill the face of him that hath committed them, with conſcious bluſhes, and his heart with terrors, that cannot well be deſcribed. But though ſhame be a paſſion both ſtrong and natural, it is very poſſible to ſtifle it. When God, provoked by a man's obſtinacy in ſin, gives him over to a reprobate mind, all ſenſe of ſhame is ſure to leave him. But beſides this judicial way of being diveſted of this paſſion, there are many natural cauſes of its decay, and amongſt theſe, there is none greater than

than the common practice of ſin, and a general corruption of manners. For ſhame ariſes not only from the ſenſe we ourſelves have of our own evil actions, but alſo from the opinion we ſuppoſe others to have of them. And for this reaſon, men of great modeſty are often in no little confuſion, though they are not conſcious to themſelves of having done any thing to be aſhamed of, merely becauſe they imagine, that men of ill-diſpoſed minds may be ready to ridicule their moſt ſerious, and, perhaps, commendable actions. But now it is evident, that when vice is become faſhionable, the ſhame of it, ſo far as it ariſes from other men's opinions, muſt vaniſh away; becauſe few will condemn that in others, which they allow in themſelves. No man will upbraid another with the commiſſion of thoſe crimes, which he knows, both may and will be retorted upon himſelf. The lewd and intemperate fear not thoſe witneſſes, whom they can accuſe of the ſame guilt. Accomplices in wickedneſs are more ready to defend or excuſe, than to cenſure and condemn each other. The majority will not fail to have the laugh on their ſide, and, if poſſible, to put even virtue itſelf out of countenance. That

ſin,

ſin, which hides itſelf, when few are guilty, grows impudent enough to out-face the ſun, when many are. So far, therefore, as ſhame ariſes from that opinion, which we ſuppoſe other men to entertain of our actions, its reſtraining force muſt neceſſarily be deſtroyed, with reſpect to that ſin, which is become faſhionable and common. It is no leſs evident, that this affection muſt alſo loſe its force, ſo far as it proceeds from the ſenſe a man hath of his own actions, when multitudes do offend. Weak minds are very apt to imagine, that what many do, may lawfully be done, or, at leaſt, that it is not ſo evil, as they have hitherto accounted it. And then nothing is more eaſy, than the tranſition from a favourable opinion of any vice to the commiſſion and juſtification of it. And thus by an implicit faith in the lawfulneſs of other men's actions, many are encouraged to do the ſame, and loſe that ſhame, which would otherwiſe be in them a powerful reſtraint from all ſin. But it is not only ſhame, but fear alſo, that loſes its influence, when numbers offend. There is not a greater check upon vice than that fear, both of temporal and eternal puniſhments, which the mind of man is naturally very apprehenſive

prehenſive of. But when vice becomes general, wicked men are very apt to fear neither: not temporal puniſhments; for if there be no laws in force to reſtrain their licentious practices, the enacting of ſuch laws is an undertaking both difficult and dangerous. Many a worthy patriot hath been deſtroyed by numbers enraged againſt him, by no other provocation, than that he dared to be the author of a law to curb their vices. But if ſuch laws have been enacted and are in force, yet who knows not the difficulty of putting them in execution, eſpecially when the tranſgreſſors are many in number and great in power. Great ones do uſually find out ſome method of evading the ſentence or the penalty. And if thoſe of lower ſtations cannot do ſo too, yet partiality in the diſtribution of juſtice greatly weakens government, and leſſens the reverence and fear of it upon the minds of men. When a corruption of manners is become general, the work of reformation is like to be a long, laborious, and a dangerous work. This often diſcourages the magiſtrate from the attempt, and makes him willing to connive at reigning vices, and yield to the ſeeming neceſſity of the times. Nor is the fear of future

puniſhments

puniſhments leſs weakened by a general corruption of manners. Many think it no ſmall extenuation of their crimes, that they have done no more than many others do. Hence, they proceed to a preſumption of a proportional diminution of puniſhment, and, as in the former caſe, the tranſition was eaſy and natural from a favourable opinion of any vice to the commiſſion and juſtification of it, ſo in this, from the conceit of a mitigation of puniſhment to a preſumption there will be none at all. As if it were a juſtification of our rebellion againſt God, that there is a general revolt. And thus are many induced to follow the multitude to do evil. Others vainly hope, that though their numbers cannot defend them againſt the power of the Almighty, yet his mercy may poſſibly induce him to relent, when he conſiders how many of his creatures he ſhall otherwiſe deſtroy; and, therefore, he may poſſibly content himſelf with the exemplary puniſhment of a few for the vindication of his juſtice; and thus preſuming upon the goodneſs and mercy of God, they hope to eſcape in the crowd. But if it ſhould ſo happen, that in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, juſtice ſhould triumph

umph over mercy, as in this life we often find mercy rejoicing againſt judgment; then they comfort themſelves with this thought, that they ſhall be in no worſe a condition than many of their neighbours, as if fellow-ſufferers were a mutual ſupport to each other, and by a friendly condolence would mitigate each other's pains.

We may now deduce one uſeful inference from what hath been ſaid under the firſt head of our diſcourſe. If ſuch be the power of example, when many and great ones lead the van, giving credit to the crime and defence to the criminal; if it be ſo difficult to ſtop the progreſs of vice, when it is grown popular; if the law becomes uſeleſs without execution, and the heart of the ſons of men is fully ſet in them to do evil, when the ſentence againſt evil works is not executed ſpeedily: How much doth it concern all perſons in any degree of authority to ſuppreſs all immorality at its firſt appearance, by a timely exertion of the power lodged in their hands for that purpoſe? How much doth it concern all ſuperiors not to give encouragement to it by an evil example, which they cannot but know to be very influential upon the

minds of their inferiors, always remembering, that hereafter we ſhall be called to a ſtrict account, not only for our own perſonal faults, but alſo for thoſe of other men, whom, by our negligence, we have not reſtrained, or by our authority or example, we have tempted or encouraged to do evil.—And, thus we proceed, Secondly,—To ſhew the folly and danger of following the multitude to do evil, upon any of the forementioned motives. For which ſoever of thoſe motives a man acts upon, it will rather aggravate than extenuate his guilt, and conſequently his puniſhment. The firſt of theſe was the natural proneneſs of mankind to imitation. This diſpoſition is neither good nor bad, but in reſpect of the patterns it copies after. If by it we be induced to follow evil examples, it immediately degenerates into a vice, and argues an inward depravity of mind, manifeſted by its wrong choice. Imitation ſeems to have been deſigned by nature for a principle of action no longer, than till reaſon or inſtruction hath enabled us to diſtinguiſh between right and wrong. And he that ſuffers this propenſity to ſupplant the uſe of reaſon, or rebel againſt its direction, unmans himſelf; and is no longer a

free

free agent, but a mere machine. He acts not from an inward principle, but by an exterior impulſe. His actions are all ſervile; other mens' doings have the force of precepts with him, which he indiſcriminately obeys. Juſtly, therefore, may we pronounce theſe Imitators a ſervile herd. To be diſpoſed to imitate without conſidering whom, or in what, is a man's great fault and diſgrace, and, therefore, can never be his apology, when it is ſuffered to trample under foot the laws of God, and the checks of his own conſcience. In anſwer to this, they who are led away by the power of example, may be ready to ſay, that they are not induced to do this or that thing, barely becauſe they ſee others do the ſame, but becauſe when many men do concur in the ſame practices it may reaſonably be ſuppoſed, they muſt have a good reaſon for what they do, governing themſelves by that implicit faith in the lawfulneſs of other mens' actings, which was mentioned as a a ſecond motive inducing many to follow a multitude to do evil. But this plea is little better than the former. For whoſoever acts upon an implicit faith in the private judgment of one or many men, how good or great ſoever, againſt

the expreſs dictates, or without attending to the voice of his own conſcience, which God hath appointed to be the immediate guide of his own actions, in ſo doing he acts in direct oppoſition to the law of God. If a man might always ſafely do what many others did, then he might ſafely be an idolator or a drunkard, or a fornicator or injurious, there being but too many of all theſe denominations in the world; and thus the foundations of morality and religion would be caſt down. Many err in judgment, many more in practice. How then ſhall he, that blindly follows the judgment and practice of other men, be ſure of not falling both into ſin and error. Every man's own judgment and conſcience is to him a better guide than either common practice or common opinion. The light of nature teaches us to follow the former, and reject the latter. And, accordingly, an Heathen writer makes it one article of a great and good man's wiſdom, that he regulated his conduct by his own judgment, concerning virtue and vice, not by others' praiſe or diſpraiſe: He that neglects the uſe of his own underſtanding to be directed by other mens' example, ſlights the bounty of his Creator

and

and deveſts himſelf of the chief excellency of his own nature, imitating the folly of that man, who put out his own eyes, that he might be led by the hand of another. The Holy Spirit of God hath taken ſufficient care, on his part, to have prevented this too common deluſion; and hath added many other paſſages of like import with that in the text. To the law and to the teſtimony, ſaith the Prophet Iſaiah, if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them. And, doubtleſs, the darkneſs is as great and dangerous, where men walk or act, as where they ſpeak, by a falſe rule. Why even of yourſelves, ſaith our Divine Teacher, do ye not judge what is right? And, methinks, he hath plainly intimated, that multitudes may be ſadly miſtaken, and a few, happily wiſer than the reſt, when he exhorteth his diſciples, to ſtrive to enter in at the ſtrait gate; becauſe ſtrait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to life, and few there be, that find it; and, on the contrary, broad is the way, that leadeth to deſtruction, and many there be, that go in thereat. We are commanded to prove all things, that we may hold faſt that which is good. He, therefore, that acts upon an implicit

plicit faith in the rectitude of other mens' actions or opinions, acts below the dignity of human nature, and contrary to the expreſs admonition of the Holy Spirit. His actions are not of Faith, i. e. they are deſtitute of a rational perſuaſion of their being lawful and right, and, conſequently, ſinful; whatſoever is not of faith is ſin; and, if ſo, how much more ſinful muſt ſuch actions be, when the judgment of a man's own mind, and the expreſs word of God, remonſtrate againſt thoſe actions, which he does, only becauſe others do them. And, therefore, that many do evil, will, by no means extenuate the guilt of that man's conduct, who follows the multitude to do evil.

As to the next motive, tempting many to run into the ſame folly. Though we cannot but own the loſs of ſhame to be the natural effect and conſequence of a general corruption of manners, yet this we ſay, that he who hath made ſo great a progreſs in wickedneſs, as to have deveſted himſelf of his natural modeſty, can never plead that, as an apology, which ought to be deplored as his greateſt crime, and the ſtrongeſt proof of the deepeſt guilt. It is true,

that

that wicked men do ſeldom meet with the contempt and diſgrace they deſerve, when multitudes are guilty of the ſame crimes: But this conſideration will have no effect on that man, who believes a future judgment. For if the thought of preſent diſgrace would reſtrain him from any tranſgreſſion; doubtleſs, the apprehenſion of that confuſion of face, the ſhame and everlaſting contempt, that will overwhelm him, when his abominations ſhall be diſplayed before men and angels, before his Creator and Redeemer, his King and Judge, who will all entertain that abhorrence of him, which he juſtly deſerves, would reſtrain him much more. Impudence in wickedneſs argues the deepeſt corruption of mind, and, therefore, God hath denounced the ſeverity of his vengeance againſt it. Were they aſhamed, when they had committed abomination, nay, they were not at all aſhamed, neither could they bluſh; therefore, ſhall they fall amongſt them that fall: In the day when I viſit, they ſhall be caſt down, ſaith the Lord.

The laſt cauſe of mens' proneneſs to follow the multitude in doing evil, mentioned by us, was,

was, that by this means, the fear of preſent or future puniſhments, is either much weakened or totally removed, and ſo all the barriers that ſhould ſtop the incurſions of wickedneſs, are thrown down. As to the power of a general corruption of manners to weaken the fear of temporal puniſhments; I obſerve, that very often, when a wicked man thinks himſelf and his accomplices too ſtrong for the arms of civil juſtice, they prove in the event too ſtrong both for him and them. And if this ſhould be the preſumptuous offender's caſe, it will greatly aggravate his miſery to find himſelf deceived by his own preſumption. Suppoſe, however, that wickedneſs hath got the aſcendant over law and government: Then becauſe there is an abſolute neceſſity for it, the Almighty ſeldom fails to interpoſe, and to convince a wicked and degenerate world, that verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth, and to vindicate the honour of his Providence and Adminiſtration, when his miniſters upon earth are no longer able. When men have caſt off all ſhame and fear, and every human reſtraint, a blow from Heaven muſt do the buſineſs, becauſe nothing elſe can; otherwiſe all human ſocieties muſt be diſſolved,

diſſolved, and all Peace, juſtice and good order be baniſhed from the earth, of which God hath undertaken the protection for his own honour. Let no man, therefore, think himſelf ſecure, becauſe many others are involved in the ſame guilt. For, as ſurely as God governs the world, ſoon or late, his ſin will find him out, either in this world, or that which is to come. The guilt of ſin is to be meaſured only by its oppoſition to the divine law. And, therefore, a wicked man's demerit is not the leſs, though the whole world ſhould conſpire in the commiſſion of the ſame criminal fact. Numbers cannot alter the nature of things; they cannot ſanctify one evil action, nor abate God's abhorrence of it. Guilt is not divided, but multiplied by communication; and, therefore, every offender muſt bear the puniſhment of his own offence. If thou be wiſe, thou ſhalt be wiſe for thyſelf, but if thou ſcorneſt, thou alone ſhalt bear it; and, therefore, though hand join in hand, the wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed. For, as numbers cannot extenuate the guilt of an offence, ſo neither can they ſo far influence the mercy of an offended God, as to ſuppreſs the operations of his juſtice. A prudent Ge-

neral may decimate a rebellious party, ſparing the reſt, that he may have the benefit of their aſſiſtance, when he hath brought them to their duty by wholeſome ſeverity. But the Almighty needeth no man's aſſiſtance to ſupport him in the government of the world, or to enable him to execute his great deſigns. It is not conſiſtent with the infinite juſtice of God to be partial, to puniſh one ungodly ſinner, and let another go free; and, therefore, when we ſhall be brought before his dreadful tribunal, equal demerit muſt ſuffer equal puniſhment. Our Saviour hath told us plainly, that the hour is coming, in which all that are in their graves ſhall hear his voice, and ſhall come forth, they that have done good to the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil, without exception, to the reſurrection of damnation: His Apoſtles have repeated the ſame declaration. We muſt all appear before the Judgment Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the things done in the body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad. God will render unto every man according to his deeds, to them, who, by patient continuance in weldoing, ſeek for glory and honour, and immortality, eternal life;

life; but to them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguiſh, upon every ſoul of man, that doth evil; for there is no reſpect of perſons with God.

Lastly, That other refuge of ſuch as follow the multitude to do evil, is as comfortleſs and deceitful as any of the former. As guilt is not, ſo neither is the weight of puniſhment leſſened by ſociety. It is not poſſible, that one man's pain ſhould be at all abated by another's ſuffering the ſame. Who is there, that thinks his gout or gravel the more tolerable, becauſe his neighbour labours under the ſame painful diſtempers? The ſting of pain is not blunted, by our knowing, that another man is in no leſs torture than ourſelves. If a man hath not diveſted himſelf of all human affections, the ſenſe of another man's miſery, ſhould rather double than diminiſh his own. If a man were extended upon the rack, or broken upon the wheel, what ſort of diſpoſitions muſt prevail in him, if he could find a mitigation of his pain in the ſhrieks and groans of another in the ſame miſerable condition? Here, in this world, indeed,

companions in adverſity may alleviate each other's ſorrows, by ſympathy and mutual aſſiſtance; and, for this reaſon, as alſo, becauſe we are, by nature, averſe to ſolitude, it is eſteemed an addition to any affliction to be alone; but in the infernal pit, inſtead of mutual condolence and friendly aſſiſtances there are the mutual accuſations and oppoſitions of enmity; inſtead of the comforts of ſociety and peace, the rage and confuſion of fiends and furies, all conſpiring to multiply the horrors of that place, where there is weeping and wailing, and gnaſhing of teeth, and to make it more diſmal, than an eternal ſolitude would be. It muſt, therefore, imply nothing leſs than infatuation to ſin againſt God, merely becauſe we may poſſibly find many partakers of the ſame ſufferings. Where is the man, that will run the riſque of deſtroying his temporal happineſs on any ſuch inducement? How then ſhould it ever enter into the heart of man to venture upon eternal damnation, becauſe poſſibly he may meet with ſome of his old companions, in drunkenneſs or debauchery, in ſcandal or detraction, in fraud or oppreſſion, in profaneneſs or infidelity, in the ſame or greater condemnation? I have yet

one

one other obſervation to add, in order to give a check to the evil influence of a general corruption of manners, which may poſſibly be of ſome weight with thoſe that have any ſparks of ingenuity remaining in them. And, that is, that though it will be a poor apology to ſay, when we are charged with any crime, that we did no more than many others did, yet it is an high commendation to a man, that he dared to be ſingular in virtue, and to ſtem the torrent of vice and wickedneſs alone, The greater the temptation to do evil is, and to ſay the truth, that multitudes do the ſame is not the leaſt; the more commendable is the virtue of reſiſting it. A particular example of piety is greatly brightened by a general impiety. A man ſhining, as a light in the world, when there is an almoſt univerſal darkneſs round him, is an object delightful to God himſelf to behold. Let us not then be conformed to this world, but tranſformed by the renewing of our mind, that we may prove what is that good, perfect, and acceptable will of God, and let us reſolve to renounce the ſociety of thoſe, who will not be ſatisfied with any thing leſs than our conſenting to run into the ſame exceſs of riot with themſelves,

ſelves, and to be true to the intereſt of religion and virtue, though the whole world beſide ſhould baſely deſert them, and to ſtand alone in their defence, though the powers of Earth and Hell ſhould arm themſelves againſt us. And may God, of his infinite goodneſs, infuſe into all our hearts this true Chriſtian fortitude, for the ſake of his well beloved Son, who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the Croſs, deſpiſed the ſhame, and is ſet down on the right hand of God, to whom be aſcribed, as is moſt due, Glory and Majeſty, Dominion and Power, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON V.

SERMON V.

Prov. Chap. xviii *Ver.* 14. *The Spirit of a Man will ſuſtain his Infirmity, but a wounded Spirit who can bear?*

ALTHOUGH a queſtion neither affirms nor denies, yet when it is put, as here in the Text, by way of appeal to common ſenſe; if the negative adverb be inſerted, the anſwer is, for the moſt part, affirmative. Is not deſtruction to the wicked? The anſwer is, yes, ſurely. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Doubtleſs he will. But when the negative is not inſerted, then the anſwer muſt be negative. What is a man profited, if he ſhould gain the whole world and loſe his own Soul? The anſwer is, nothing. Who can dwell with everlaſting burnings? No man. So here a wounded ſpirit who can bear is as much as to ſay, that it is an evil which no mortal man can bear.

bear. But what is this wounded ſpirit, which is ſuch an intolerable evil? To this I anſwer, that the body is the tabernacle of the ſoul, and the inſtrument of all its external operations. This part of our compoſition is liable to diſeaſe and pain, to wounds, decay and death; but the ſoul is not liable to any external violence. Its wounds are of another kind, and proceed from another cauſe. This our Saviour plainly intimates, when he bids his Diſciples not to fear them, which kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather to fear him, who, when he hath killed the body, is able to deſtroy both body and ſoul in Hell. But what is that thing, which can provoke the Almighty to exerciſe an act of ſuch ſeverity? I need not tell you, that it is ſin only, that can do this; ſin, wilful, deliberate, unrepented of. This is that evil, by which the Spirit is wounded; and dreadful is that wound. When the ſoul reviews its paſt actions, and ſees the blackneſs of its own guilt, conſiders the juſtice and the purity of the divine Nature, the impoſſibility of a polluted creature's being happy in the enjoyment of its Creator, the dreadful conſequences of an eternal ſeparation from God, and

of

of being an object of his everlaſting diſpleaſure, when the guilty ſpirit, I ſay, thus reflects, (which it cannot always forbear to do) then the ſpirit begins to feel its wound; then remorſe and fear poſſeſs it by turns; then it perceives, that ſin is the ſting of death and life too. Hence it follows, that a wounded ſpirit and a guilty conſcience are one and the ſame thing, differently expreſſed; and from its oppoſition to the ſpirit of a man that will bear his infirmity, we may infer, that by this latter muſt be meant the ſpirit of a man, whoſe conſcience is, or at leaſt, who, like St. Paul, exerciſes himſelf, to have always a conſcience, void of offence both towards God and towards man; and by his infirmity all thoſe evils (an evil conſcience only excepted) to which mankind is ſubject in this life; ſuch as pain, diſeaſe, or death, loſs of eſtate, of friends, relations, reputation. All theſe the ſpirit of an innocent and upright man will bear; but a wounded ſpirit, that is, a guilty conſcience, is an intolerable evil, which no man can bear. Theſe are the two propoſitions, into which the text naturally divides itſelf. I begin with the firſt, viz. That an innocent and good man will bear, with patience, all thoſe outward

evils, to which mankind is ſubject in this life. To the further illuſtration of the meaning, and ſtronger proof of the truth of this propoſition, it may be neceſſary to conſider from what ſprings that firmneſs of mind in a good man, by which he is enabled to bear the calamities of life, proceeds. Now, ſome aſcribe this ability, in part, to nature; and ſay, that although the diſpoſitions and powers, which were impreſſed upon, or infuſed into the human mind at our creation, are ſome obliterated; and others, weakened and obſcured: yet, ſeveral characters of that firſt impreſſion do ſtill remain; ſuch as a power of diſcerning between good and evil, otherwiſe called the moral ſenſe, parental affection, benevolence, compaſſion, and, in particular, a certain contentment and chearfulneſs of ſpirit, the remains of that delight, which muſt have ſprung up in the minds of our firſt parents, from a conſciouſneſs of their own exiſtence, heightened by a knowledge of their divine Benefactor. This delight ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of exiſtence, or ſomething like it, is diſcernible in children; and to it we may aſcribe that patience, with which they ſometimes bear heat and cold, diſeaſe and pain, in ſuch a manner,

as

as may cauſe thoſe of riper years to bluſh at the recollection of their complaints, on occaſion of the little croſs events of life. Others derive this inbred fortitude from a right temper of the blood and ſpirits. But from what cauſe ſoever it may ariſe, the effects of it are daily ſeen. To this it is to be aſcribed, that the gallant ſoldier preſerves a heart undaunted in the heat of action; and that the hardy ſailor proportions his activity to his danger, and bravely ſtruggles with, and through, the ſtorm. But though this conſtitutional fortitude may be conſidered as a ſubſidiary ſupport, yet experience ſhews it may be ſoon oppreſſed, and that it will faint in the day of adverſity, becauſe, indeed, its ſtrength is ſmall; And, therefore, it is univerſally agreed, that the ſuccours of reaſon muſt be called in to its aid. As it is neceſſary, that the great and good man ſhould bear as well as forbear. The philoſophers have placed fortitude amongſt the cardinal virtues. And, thus they reaſon: If life be deſirable, upon the whole, we ought to accept it with its inconveniences, as well as conveniences; and be content to bear the pain, that we may enjoy the pleaſure of it; that a calm uſually ſucceeds a

ſtorm; and that if it be ill with us now, it ſhall not long be ſo: That light afflictions muſt be tolerable, and thoſe which are extreme, will the ſooner have an end: That the burden, which cannot be caſt off, is made lighter by patience, heavier by impatience: That the more we ſtruggle with the chain, the more it galls us: That there never was a great man, that had not difficulties almoſt inſuperable to contend with: That adverſity is the ſchool and theatre of virtue, and the only path to fame and glory: And, therefore, they conclude, that we ought not to ſhrink under misfortunes and diſappointments, but to perſevere in the practice of virtue with more reſolution and patience, than our preſent circumſtances would ſeem to encourage, hoping for better times. Theſe are arguments of ſome weight, and have produced brilliant examples both of active and paſſive virtue; but the number is not great. How many are there, that would be glad to exchange their preſent ſufferings for death? Too many expecting deliverance by it, have wickedly deſtroyed themſelves. Many perſons, of great natural courage, and of improved underſtandings, under great afflictions and unexpected diſappointments, have

been

been tempted to conſider virtue, as an empty name; and fame, as nothing more than the breath of ſurvivors paſſing over the hero s tomb, of which he can have no perception. And, will ſuch helps as theſe, when a man is caſt into the troubled waters of affliction, enable him to keep his head above them? Surely, no. Nature without grace, is weak: For without me, ſaith our divine Teacher, ye can do nothing. And, though reaſon may offer its aſſiſtance, yet the ſorrow of the world rejects and betrays the ſuccours, which reaſon offers; and having no hope it worketh death: And, therefore, it will be neceſſary to look out for better ſupports than either or both of thoſe we have yet mentioned. Now, theſe are Faith and a good Conſcience, which do not exclude the aids of nature and reaſon, but include and ſtrengthen them. By the help of theſe we ſhall be able to ſay with David, my fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my heart and my portion for ever. For faith looks beyond reaſon, and ſees the hand and deſign of a kind and gracious Providence in every event; yea, in what we commonly, but falſely, call his ſevereſt diſpenſations. The believer, whatſoever his affliction

may

may be, is dumb, and openeth not his mouth, becauſe it is God's doing; or if he ſpeaks, it is in Eli's language; it is the Lord, let him do what ſeemeth him good. He conſiders, that the Lord chaſteneth his elect, as a Father the Son, in whom he delighteth; that if he be without chaſtiſement, whereof all are partakers, then he is dealt with, as a baſtard, not a ſon. For what ſon is he, whom the father chaſteneth not? He, therefore, keeps his eye fixed upon the gracious end of his affliction, and carefully co-operates with the benevolent intention of his heavenly Father, eaſily and naturally entering into the penitent and grateful ſentiments of the Royal Pſalmiſt: Before I was afflicted, I went wrong; but now have I kept thy word. He, therefore, rejoices in tribulation, and finds, by experience, that though no affliction be for the preſent joyous but grievous; yet, afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteouſneſs to them, that are exerciſed thereby. This explains to him the reaſonableneſs and propriety of St. James's exhortation, which muſt appear a paradox to the carnal man: My brethren count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh

worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing. He thinks it no ſtrange thing to hear St. Paul ſay, we not only rejoice in hope of the Glory of God, but we glory in Tribulations alſo, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not aſhamed. That is, tribulations exerciſe, and improve patience, patience makes us know ourſelves, and gives us an experimental ſenſe of the love of God to us in our correction and reformation, which is a ſolid foundation of our hope of finding mercy with him, which hope maketh us not aſhamed either of the religion we profeſs, or the ſufferings we endure. Thus the good man, imputing his affliction to his heavenly Father's love, can kiſs the rod of his correction, and feels the ſame hand ſcourging and ſupporting him at the ſame time. He knows, that the good ſpirit of God will never leave him, nor forſake him; that whatſoever the temptation be, God, who is able, is alſo willing to make a way for him to eſcape; and this aſſurance of the love of God in Chriſt is an effectual ſupport. Yea, his faith hath yet a more

more extenſive proſpect; it carries its eye into futurity, and looks beyond the veil, and is aſſured, that the light affliction, which is but for a moment, ſhall work for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory. He knows, that bleſſed are they, that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted; that bleſſed is the man, that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he ſhall receive the Crown of Glory, which the Lord hath promiſed to them, that love him. Thus nature, reaſon, faith and grace, and a ſure and ſtedfaſt hope of the recompence of an eternal reward, enable the good man to bear his infirmity, and render him invincible: The good man, I ſay, becauſe though faith and a good conſcience are things very different in idea, they are never found exiſting ſeparately. Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God; and who, that believes there is a God, and that he is the rewarder of them, that diligently ſeek him, will not earneſtly endeavour to pleaſe him? It cannot, therefore, be ſuppoſed, that a good conſcience can be without faith, nor faith without a good conſcience. And, therefore, without both in conjunction, there can be no rational ground of hope. What

God

God and nature have thus joined together, let no man put aſunder. And then the effect will be both ſure and juſt. And thus you ſee, that a good conſcience, which always implies or preſuppoſes faith, is an effectual ſupport to the heart of man under all the calamities incident to human life. This truth is farther confirmed by experience, and many glorious examples of heroic patience and fortitude recorded in the holy Scriptures. Is the good man alarmed with evil tidings, encompaſſed with enemies, beſet with dangers on every ſide? His affiance in God keeps him in heart. I laid me down, ſaith David, when in ſuch circumſtances, and ſlept and roſe again, for the Lord ſuſtained me; I will not be afraid for ten thouſands of the people, that have ſet themſelves againſt me round about. Do foreign enemies, like modern Tartars, make incurſions, and drive away his cattle, and all his ſubſtance? Doth a violent ſtorm from the wilderneſs ſmite the four corners of his houſe, ſo that it falls, and buries his children in the ruins? Then if he hath Job's faith and innocence, he will ſay with him, naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked ſhall I return thither: The Lord gave, and the Lord hath

taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord. Is he an exile and a fugitive in a foreign land? He looketh forward to that abiding City whoſe Maker and Builder is God. Hath he it in his power to gratify every ſenſual appetite, to be rich and great and honourable? Yet if his duty require it, he will deny himſelf. The violence and rage of tyrants cannot divert the righteous man from the purſuit of the great end, he hath in view. Let Moſes be tempted with the honour of being accounted the ſon of Pharaoh's daughter, and all the pleaſures of a ſplendid court; yet he will chuſe rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon. Let Paul be ſtoned, and left for dead, for preaching the Goſpel; yet no ſooner ſhall he recover himſelf, but he will return to his duty. Is he beaten with many ſtripes and caſt into priſon? Yet, even there, with his faithful companion Silas, he will pray, and ſing praiſes unto God, rejoicing, as St. Peter, and the other Apoſtles did, upon a like occaſion, that he is counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for the name of Chriſt. The time would fail me, ſhould I go on to tell of all thoſe martyrs and confeſſors, ſome of which

had

had trial of cruel mockings and ſcourgings, yea, moreover, of bonds and impriſonment, were ſtoned, were ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the ſword; others wandered about in ſheep-ſkins, and goat-ſkins, in deſerts and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; yet accepted not deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection. Thus, you ſee, what heavy burdens faith and a good conſcience have enabled men, like ourſelves, to bear; which is a full proof of the wiſe man's aphoriſm, that the ſpirit of a man will ſuſtain his infirmity. Behold here, the ineſtimable value of a conſcience, void of offence both towards God and towards man; how it ſtrengthens, comforts, and refreſhes the ſoul: No temporal good can match it, no temporal evil overmatch it; it renders every evil tolerable, enables the weakeſt man patiently to endure every the greateſt miſery. Who can expreſs the joy and comforts flowing from conſcious innocence, a juſt ſelf-approbation, a confidence towards God, an aſſurance of his help and love, and a well-grounded hope and proſpect of future happineſs in the viſion of him to all eternity? Here is room enough for

enlargement; but the time and the text call upon us to attend to the proof of the ſecond propoſition; that a guilty conſcience is of all the evils, incident to human nature in our preſent ſtate, the moſt intolerable. Conſcience is a peculiar faculty of the ſoul, planted in it by the Author of our being, to point out to us our duty, and to make known to us our ſpiritual ſtate. It is, therefore, honoured by ſome, with the title of the deputy of God in man, being ſuperior to every other faculty, and ſubordinate to him only: It ſits at the helm, and guides the whole moral man: So long as it maintains its juſt authority, and does its duty, there is order, harmony and peace, within; and the effect is, an uniform obedience. In this ſtate it approves, commends, juſtifies, encourages, comforts, and fills the ſoul with hope and joy: And therein much of that divine Image, in which we were created, doth conſiſt. In the contrary ſtate, when it is blinded by ignorance, ſtupified by carnal appetites and indulgencies, overborne by headſtrong paſſions, ſeared by evil habits, oppoſed by temporal intereſts, and ſometimes depoſed, by a combination of all theſe adverſaries together, diſorder, diſcord, inteſtine war, and diſobedience

diſobedience enſue; and in this latter ſtate, until it is quite ſilenced, it remonſtrates, cenſures, reproaches, accuſes, condemns, and fills the ſoul with the moſt tormenting diſquietudes, ſhame, fear, anguiſh, deſpair, and evil forebodings; and is to man, that, which ſome have called, the Hell within him; that wounded ſpirit, which no man can bear. That there is ſuch a principle in man, acting in the manner, and producing the effects above mentioned, according to its good or evil ſtate, is known by experience, and abundantly declared in holy Scripture. If our heart, which is but another name for conſcience, condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; but if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. This is that principle, which Origen called his tutor; and Socrates, his genius; which he always moſt carefully obeyed. To this it is to be aſcribed, that when St. Paul reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and was glad to have the ſuppoſed criminal removed from his preſence; as if he, and not the Apoſtle, had been the party accuſed. In ſhort it may be reaſonably preſumed,

there

there never was a Heathen, that did not at ſome time, and in ſome degree, find this principle operating in him, accuſing or elſe excuſing him to himſelf, according to the quality of his deeds. In many inſtances the viſible effects of an accuſing conſcience have been moſt dreadful. Who can read, without aſtoniſhment, the anguiſh and diſtreſs of ſoul, when the ſpirit of God was departed from him? When Judas ſaw that his Maſter, whom, through avarice, he had betrayed, was condemned, whom he might poſſibly think, his own innocence ſhould have protected, his conſcience immediately awoke, in the moſt amazing terrors. The money in his purſe is become a gnawing vulture in his breaſt, or rather each of the thirty pieces, a diſtinct viper, ſtinging him to death. He vainly ſtrives to eaſe his conſcience; he immediately brings the fatal bribe, the price of his Saviour's blood, yea, and of his own too, back to thoſe, that had tempted him to betray him. He confeſſeth his treaſon and his horrid ſin: I have ſinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood: And they ſaid, what is that to us? See thou to that! What? No Comfort! No Compaſſion from thoſe, that had corrupted him!

No<

Not one, that will bear the leaſt part of the horrid guilt, or aſſiſt him in preventing the ſhocking effects of that his great offence? No! Who doth not expect the conſequence, too often ſeen in common life, I mean, his immediate deſtruction? He caſts down the thirty pieces of ſilver in the temple, departs, and hangs himſelf. But what is the reaſon, that Judas thus falls out with life? Is he a Sadducee, that believes neither Angel nor Spirit? No. Why ſhould he be in ſo much haſte to ſhorten his days? Was there no wine in Jeruſalem, no cheerful companion to diſſipate a gloomy thought? Enough of both. But Judas his mirth is at an end; he recollects his Maſter's prediction: Wo unto that man, by whom the ſon of man is betrayed! Better were it for him, that a millſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea. The terrors of God are upon him; and either he muſt languiſh on the rack on earth, or elſe, once for all, plunge himſelf into the depth of Hell: his preſent anguiſh puts him upon the latter moſt unhappy choice; to eſcape the fire he leaps into the flames. See here the torture of a wounded ſpirit, the rending, cutting, and the laſhes of an angry

conſcience.

conſcience. When it pleaſes God to reſtore this his deputy to its juſt authority, by ſome alarming diſpenſation, diſeaſe, or loſs, or pain; it is hardly poſſible to find words fully expreſſive of the ſufferer's miſery. Hear how David, under ſuch diſcipline complains: My moiſture, ſaith he, is like the drought in ſummer; my ſins are like a ſore burden, too heavy for me to bear: There is no reſt in my bones by reaſon of my ſin; I have roared for the very diſquietneſs of my heart. If he thus complains under a ſenſe of his guilt, though not deſpairing of mercy: When guilt, remorſe, and deſpair, act with united force, who can expreſs the torture? In this caſe every faculty of the ſoul of man is up in arms againſt him; his memory recollects the ſins of his whole life; and his reaſon juſtifies the ſentence, which his conſcience had pronounced: His proſpect is a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation; and his imagination draws the moſt frightful ſcenes of his own deſtruction. He is ever concluding that his iniquity is greater than can be forgiven. The arrows of the Almighty are within him, the poiſon whereof will drink up his ſpirits: In the morning he will ſay, would God it were

even,

even, and at even, would God it were morning, for the fear of his heart, wherewith he ſhall fear, and for the ſight of his eyes, with which he ſhall ſee. He ſhall be full of toſſings to and fro unto the dawning of the day, like the troubled ſea, which cannot reſt. Yet, no change of time or place ſhall be able to expel the tormenting inmate, that preys upon his ſoul. Yea, in thoughts from the viſions of the night, when deep ſleep falleth upon men, fear cometh upon him and trembling, which maketh all his bones to ſhake. Sometime he is on the top of an hideous precipice; and the earth, on which he ſtands, ſhrinks from under him: Sometimes he is ſurrounded with thieves and murderers, whoſe numbers increaſe, as they approach, ſo that there is no eſcaping: At other times, perhaps, the ſhip, in which he ſails, is driven, by the violence of winds and waves, againſt the rocks, and daſhed in pieces. So that ſleeping or waking he takes no reſt, and his imagined miſeries are for the time equal to real ones. He longeth for death, but it cometh not; and rejoiceth exceedingly, when he can find the grave. In ſuch a wretched condition as this, whither ſhall he fly for refuge? Heaven frowns upon

him from above; Hell from beneath, is moved for him to meet him at his coming. Will he ſeek for relief in the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs? Will he comfort himſelf in thoſe empty titles, that were the purchaſe of lawleſs ambition, or by the recollection of his paſt pleaſures and criminal indulgencies? All theſe will upbraid him with his guilt and aggravate his miſery. Will he call upon the mountains to fall upon him, and the rocks to cover him from the wrath of the Lamb? All theſe will be deaf to his cries; and that Lamb of God, which taketh away the ſins of the world, will, with reſpect to ſuch obſtinate offenders, be transformed into the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and ſay, thoſe, mine enemies, that would not that I ſhould rule over them, bring them hither and ſlay them before me. In this unhappy ſtate, he is an intolerable burden to himſelf. And, how ſhould the ſpirit of a man bear its infirmity, when it is not able to bear its own weight? No wonder then, that ſo many abandoned, impenitent reprobates, when loſſes, diſappointments, diſeaſe or pain, have brought them to reflection, and reſtored an abuſed conſcience to its office and authority, ſhould have plunged themſelves into

into the nethermoſt Hell to extinguiſh, as they might vainly hope, the Hell within them. Much more might be ſaid in proof of this propoſition, that a wounded ſpirit is an evil which no man can bear; but I hope, that what hath been already ſaid, will be ſufficient to awaken the moſt lethargic ſinner out of his ſpiritual ſlumber before it be too late. To weaken the force of what hath been ſaid, ſome aſcribe theſe agitations of a guilty mind to ſuperſtition only, and ſay, that Judas's was an extraordinary caſe; and where one ſinner is ſo terrified, a thouſand die in peace: That many wicked men live long, and have riches in poſſeſſion, and leave the world with as few ſymptoms of internal torture, as their better neighbours. And thus the voices of nature, reaſon and revelation are put to ſilence, and diſappointed of their proper effect. Having largely conſidered the force of the latter part of this objection, in a diſcourſe on another ſubject, I ſhall ſay the leſs of it here. And only anſwer, that we are very incompetent judges of the merit or demerit of other men.—We often think ſome men better, and others worſe than they really are; and yet, if God does not diſpenſe his judgments or his mercies,

according to our ſtandard, we are offended. We forget, that this World is not the place of adequate retribution, but of probation only: And that obedience muſt be a matter not of conſtraint but choice; which could hardly be, if the ſentence againſt Evil works were executed ſpeedily. I anſwer further, that we are no better judges of other mens' conditions than of their deſerts. We often think ſome happy, that are miſerable, and others miſerable, that are not ſo. The wicked endeavour all they can, to conceal their miſery and puniſhment; and as this often lies within, it is the more eaſily, though not always, concealed. And, ſure, you will not ſay, that thoſe wicked men, whom conſcious guilt holds in perpetual conſternation, and cuts with ſecret ſtripes, have eſcaped. But what if we ſhould ſuppoſe ſome to eſcape? Some, I ſay, becauſe it is not ſo with many; Judas was as far from thinking, at the time he acted his treaſon, that his conſcience would ſo ſoon awake, and torment him as it did, as any other man can be, and yet it did awake! But let us ſuppoſe, however, that this ſtupor ſhould continue to the end of life. For conſcience, as we before obſerved, may be laid aſleep, depoſed,

and

and rendered lifeleſs and inſenſible. Some having the underſtanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, and being paſt feeling, have given themſelves over unto Lacivioufneſs, to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs; or, perhaps, they have been habitual tranſgreſſors from their infancy, and ſtifled conſcience in its birth; or, which is oftener the caſe, that ſtrongeſt opiate, infidelity, hath taken away the moral ſenſe. For, where there is no God, there can be no conſcience. In this moſt deplorable ſtate, ſurely, they are not to be envied: For, if not before, yet immediately after death, when theſe carnal eyes are cloſed, and the naked ſpirit ſteps into that future ſtate, where deſtruction hath no covering; it will moſt certainly awake; and then ſhall that gnawing worm begin to live, which never dies; and that fire be kindled, which never ſhall be quenched. From what hath been ſaid, we may learn how much better it is to ſuffer than to ſin: Every ſin hurts the Soul, and many of them give it a moſt deadly wound. Habitual intemperance, uncleanneſs, profaneneſs, deceit, injuſtice, extortion, oppreſſion, perjury, adultery, murder, are of this kind.

kind. The wounds, the ſoul receives from theſe, are extremely painful and difficult of cure; far more to be dreaded than thoſe, by which our bodies, properties, or good name, can be affected. But ſome, perhaps, will ſay, we cannot dreſs in purple and fine linen, and fare ſumptuouſly every day; nor partake of the common entertainments, as ſome of our neighbours do: Nay, perhaps, we cannot make that figure in the world, that we ourſelves have hitherto done. And are not theſe ſtrong temptations to injuſtice, oppreſſion or fraud, when an opportunity is put into our hands? It is to be feared, they too often prove ſo to many worldly-minded men; but they ought to remember, that of two evils the leſs is to be choſen. Is not a morſel of bread more to be deſired, than dainties, with a griping conſcience? Is it not better to travel home on foot with ſome fatigue, than with numerous attendants and ſplendid equipage, to execution? And, laſtly, is it not more eligible to be brought low, even to the duſt in this world, than to be caſt into the Pit of endleſs Perdition, in that which is to come? By ſuch conſiderations as theſe, the force of every temptation might be rebated; and if we would but eſtimate

the

the worth of an acquitting, or the horrors of a condemning, conſcience now, as we ſhall do in the hour of death, and at the day of judgment, we ſhould find it an eaſy matter to determine to bear every evil, yea, to die a thouſand deaths, rather than to omit the performance of any neceſſary duty, or commit a wilful ſin. Natural evils, as we have proved before, may be borne by an innocent and virtuous mind, but to ſin is in effect to ſuffer the moſt intolerable of all evils, which ſoon or late will cauſe the moſt intenſe pain, break the ſpirit, and utterly diveſt the man of all patience, courage and reſolution, and ſtrip him of all comforts at a ſtroke. The wounded ſpirit ſickens at the ſight of thoſe things, by which it was tempted to do evil.— To dally with ſin, is to play upon the hole of the Aſp, or at the mouth of the Cockatrice den; when they ſpy their opportunity, they will bolt out and give thee a mortal wound. Reſolve, then, to keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it are the iſſues both of life and death. Reſolve that, until you die, you will not remove your integrity from you; that you will hold faſt your innocence, and not let it go; that your heart ſhall not reproach you, ſo long

as you live. This, together with earneſt ſupplications to the Throne of Grace for pardon and mercy, is the way to reſtore health and peace to the wounded ſpirit, and to preſerve them, when reſtored. Oh! But ſome are ready to ſay, we dare not ſo much as lift up our eyes towards Heaven; we have been guilty of diſobedience, ingratitude, rebellion and treaſon, againſt the God that made us, and the ever bleſſed Son of God, that redeemed us with his Blood: Yea, we have ſtifled and fruſtrated the ſanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit of God, admit the charge; yet ſtill there may be room for repentance. Reſolve, inſtantly, to undo, as far as you are able, all the evils you have done; and, with the humble publican, ſmite upon your breaſt and ſay, Lord be merciful to me a ſinner; and you may yet be pardoned, juſtified and ſaved, through the merits of your Redeemer. For deſperate muſt be that wound, which the great Phyſician of the ſoul cannot heal; and deep that ſtain, which the blood of the Lamb, ſlain from the foundation of the world, cannot waſh out. To the inſolvent debtor, who prayed his Lord to have patience with him, ten thouſand talents would have been

finally

finally remitted, had he extended the like pity to his fellow-ſervant. Let no man, therefore, deſpair of forgiveneſs, if he can but truly repent of his ſins, how many and great ſoever they have been: This is the conſolation of all true Chriſtians, and it is theirs only. Purge, then, your conſciences from dead works to ſerve the living God, and exerciſe yourſelves to have always a conſcience void of offence, both towards God and towards man. The law of God is its rule; read therein by day, and meditate by night: Draw your directions thence, and follow them with the greateſt care, embracing truth rejecting error; chooſing good, and refuſing evil. This will enable you to bear every calamity incident to this mortal ſtate, with a becoming patience and reſignation. This will ſweeten every natural pleaſure; yea, the teſtimony of your conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, you have had your converſation in the world, will be a cordial, that will revive your ſpirits under the qualms and agonies of death. No ſecret upbradings, no ſtinging reflections, no ſelf-accuſations nor condemnations, no evil forebodings nor tormenting anxieties, about your future ſtate, will then diſturb your

peace; but in the multitude of the ſorrows, you may have in your hearts, the divine comforts will refreſh your ſouls; and you ſhall lay yourſelves down to die with as little reluctance, yea, with the ſame earneſtneſs of deſire, wherewith the weary traveller lays him down to reſt. Give me leave now to conclude this diſcourſe with that excellent prayer of a pious modern Poet, in which many of theſe ſentiments are briefly, yet juſtly, expreſſed.—His words are theſe:

> Father of Light and Life, thou good Supreme,
> Oh! Teach me what is good—teach me thyſelf,
> Keep me from Folly, Vanity, and Vice,
> And every low Purſuit; and fill my Soul
> With Knowledge, conſcious Peace, and Virtue pure,
> Sacred, Subſtantial, never fading Bliſs.

Which God, of his infinite mercy, grant to us all, through the merits of his only begotten Son, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, as is for ever due, Dominion and Power, Thanſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON VI.

SERMON VI.

Matthew, Chap. v. *Ver.* 20.—*Except your Righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ye ſhall, in no Caſe, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.*

THESE Words do clearly ſhew, that a moral Righteouſneſs is a neceſſary condition of Salvation, even now under the Goſpel covenant; for without a Righteouſneſs, which may, in ſome reſpects, be called our own, ſuperior to that of the Scribes and Phariſees, our Saviour hath declared, we ſhall, in no caſe, enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. There muſt be a Righteouſneſs acquired by, and abiding in us, as well as a Righteouſneſs imputed to us, before we can be ſaved. If either of theſe be wanting, juſtification cannot proceed, conſiſtent either with the natural fitneſs of things, or the infi-

nite juſtice of God. Without the Righteouſneſs of the law (I do not mean the ritual or ceremonial parts of the Moſaic law, which have had their completion, but the Moral Law, which is of eternal obligation) that is, without an habitual rectitude of mind and manners, without a careful conformity of our thoughts, affections, words and actions, to the moral attributes of God, the dictates of right reaſon, and the precepts of the Goſpel of Chriſt, without a ſincere deſire and endeavour to do the whole will of God, Heaven would be no place of happineſs to us, and without a more compleat Righteouſneſs than our own, to compenſate for, and fill up its emptineſs and imperfection, imputed to us; or in other words, without our being accounted righteous, or accepted as ſuch, for the meritorious obedience and ſufferings of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, the divine Juſtice would not permit him to juſtify the unprofitable. And yet, I fear, if God would be extreme to mark what is done amiſs, the beſt of us would deſerve a worſe denomination. A Righteouſneſs abiding in us, though not perfect, is naturally, and a Righteouſneſs imputed to us, more perfect than that, which

is

is properly our own, nay, in very truth, abſolutely perfect, is morally neceſſary (the infinite wiſdom and juſtice of God requiring it) to entitle us to the favour of God. For we are accepted only in the beloved, and he of God is made unto us wiſdom and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption. The perfect and full obedience of our bleſſed Redeemer, which, as we are members of his myſtical body, is ours; or which renders our obedience acceptable unto God; and our own beſt obedience, though not perfect and full like his, yet more compleat than that of the Scribes and Phariſees, muſt jointly concur, though not equally contribute, to our final juſtification. For there is no other name under Heaven given unto man, whereby we may be ſaved, but only the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. If we abide not in him, we ſhall be caſt forth, as a branch that is withered, which men gather and caſt into the fire; yea, if we be in him, by profeſſion, yet do not bring forth better Fruit than the Scribes and Phariſees, we cannot be ſaved: for, except our Righteouſneſs ſhall exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, we ſhall, in no caſe, enter into the kingdom of Heaven.

In

In a further diſcourſe upon theſe words, that we may not be diſappointed of that Righteouſneſs, which depends upon the free grace of God in the Chriſtian covenant, the Righteouſneſs, which is of God by Faith, by falling ſhort of that Righteouſneſs, which, in ſome meaſure, depends upon ourſelves; I will firſt deſcribe the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, obſerving the particular unpardonable defects, that were therein.

Secondly.—I ſhall then deduce the true notion of that Chriſtian moral Righteouſneſs, which now under the Goſpel is required, as a neceſſary, not meritorious, condition of ſalvation; and,

Thirdly.—I ſhall recommend to you the purſuit of that Righteouſneſs upon the conſideration ſuggeſted in the text, viz. the impoſſibility of entering into the kingdom of Heaven without it.

First, then, I am to deſcribe the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and obſerve to you the particular unpardonable defects, which were in it.

Now

Now the firſt notorious defect in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and, indeed, of the generality of the Jewiſh nation, was this :—That they thought an external obedience to the Letter of the Law, which exempted them from the temporal penalties, due to the violation of it, ſufficient to denominate them righteous, though they had little regard to the purity of their hearts and inward affections. So that the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees was only external and ſuperficial; they had very little concern for the obſervance of thoſe precepts, that relate to the regulation of the inward man. There being no temporal penalties annexed to the violation of them; they looked upon them, rather as matter of advice, than precept; or preſumed, at leaſt, that the guilt contracted by their mental ſins, was ſo done away by their ſacrifices, that God would remember them no more. That there was this defect in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, appears not only from Holy Scriptures, but from ſundry paſſages in the writings of the Jews themſelves. Tripho, ſpeaking of thoſe Goſpel precepts, which enjoin the obedience of the heart and affections, declares, they

ſeemed

ſeemed to him impoſſible to be obſerved. And Joſephus, who we may be ſure, would not be partial in favour of the moſt inveterate enemy of the Jewiſh nation, reproves Polybius for aſcribing the death of Antiochus to ſacrilige intended, but not committed by him. Foraſmuch as he did not actually execute his evil intention, he deſerved, ſaith this author, no puniſhment. The Jews ſeem to have had one and the ſame meaſure of obedience, both to divine and human laws; the latter of which can extend their influence to the regulation of the outward action only. The civil magiſtrate judges of the intention by the overt act, and the circumſtances of it; but God judges of the act by the intention, yet not altogether, or only by that; for no good intention can legitimate an evil action; but an action materially good is always vitiated by an evil intention, as the guilt of an action materially evil is much abated by a good one. Man looketh on the outward appearance, but God looketh on the heart, and he ſearcheth the heart and trieth the reins, to give to every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings. And, therefore, not he, whom man commendeth, is approved; but he whom

the

the (Cor. ii. 10, 18) Lord commendeth. The ſame meaſure of obedience will not ſerve in both caſes; neither will an external obedience denominate a man righteous in the ſight of God. And yet we ſee very plainly in the verſe immediately following the text, that this was the received notion of obedience amongſt the Jews, where our Saviour corrects this miſtake, and ſaith, Ye have heard, that it hath been ſaid by them of old time, Thou ſhalt not kill. In theſe words he refers to the doctrine of the Scribes and Phariſees, which he requires his Diſciples to beware of, and in their practice to exceed; becauſe they reſtrained the commandment, in their comments upon it, to actual murder only; which if a man did not commit, he was thought to have kept within the bounds of the ſixth commandment, as, indeed, he did, with regard to the temporal puniſhments annexed to the tranſgreſſion of it by the law of Moſes. But our Saviour tells them plainly, verſe 22, that the guilt in this particular lies as deep as the very firſt beginning and ſallies of an angry mind, towards a conteſt, that may end in blood; and affirms, that whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe, ſhall be in danger of the judgment. (Joh. i. 3, 15) St. John,

ſpeaking by the ſame Spirit of Truth, hath aſſured us, that whoſoever hateth his brother is a murderer, meaning, that he is already ſuch, though he hath not put his malicious intentions in execution. How much ſoever a man tranſgreſſed by the ſtrength of an impure imagination, ſo long as he abſtained from actual ſin; he was in their notion of obedience an innocent and good man; but our Saviour has carefully corrected this Doctrine, ſo deſtructive of true Holineſs, by affirming, that murder may be committed in a malicious or revengeful heart, and (Matth. 5, 28) adultery by a luſtful eye, and, in a word, any other ſin by the evil affection that produces it. Thus you ſee it was one notorious defect in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, that it was only external and ſuperficial; and this was the reaſon, that our Saviour ſo often reproaches them with their Hypocriſy. (Matt. 23, 25, 28) Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and of the platter, but within are full of extortion and exceſs: Thou blind Phariſee, cleanſe firſt that, which is within, that the outſide may be clean alſo. Wo unto you Scribes and Phariſees, Hypocrites, for ye are like unto whited

Sepulchres,

Sepulchres, which, indeed, appear beautiful without, but within are full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanneſs. Even ſo, ye alſo, outwardly, appear righteous unto men, but within are full of Hypocriſy and iniquity.

Secondly.—Another great defect in the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, was this: That it was not only external and ſuperficial, but partial alſo; making void ſome of the precepts of the law, holding others to be ſuch as might, without much offence, be diſpenſed with, and ſuperſeding the neceſſity of the moſt important, by a ſubſtitution of leſs conſiderable duties in their ſtead; thoſe of poſitive inſtitution inſtead of thoſe of moral obligation, as if they had thought to pacify the wrath of God, and compenſate for an offenſive omiſſion or commiſſion againſt his ſovereign command, by certain ritual and legal performances: That they made void ſome of the precepts of the divine law, is expreſſly charged upon them by our Saviour, and proved by a particular inſtance. Matthew xv. ver. 4, 5 and 6. God commanded, ſaying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother, and he that curſeth Father or Mother, let him die

the death. But ye, Scribes and Phariſees, ſay, whoſoever ſhall ſay unto his Father or Mother, it is a gift, by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, and honour not his Father or his Mother, he ſhall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect, by your Tradition. The ſame thing is repeated, with ſome little variation, in St. Mark's Goſpel. The meaning of both which paſſages is this: Whereas God hath commanded, that a man ſhall honour his Parents, and pay them all due reverence and obedience, which muſt imply an obligation to every filial duty, and particularly, that of relieving them, when they are in diſtreſs; yet, ye following your own tradition, pronounce that man not only free from any obligation to obſerve, but on the contrary, obliged not to obſerve this commandment, if, by chance, he hath raſhly vowed, that whatſoever he hath, that might be of uſe or benefit to his parents, ſhould be to him as Korban, that is, as a thing devoted to the church treaſury; which no Jew had a power, after ſuch a vow, according to the doctrine of the Scribes and Phariſees, to apply to any other uſe; ſupplanting, by this doctrine, a moſt indiſpenſible duty,

as

as if the obligation of a rash, or, perhaps, pretended vow, were more binding, than that of a divine command.

But the Scribes and Pharisees were not only partial in their obedience, by making void some of the most indispensible duties, but also, by substituting certain ritual and legal performances, instead of the duties of moral obligation. This practice we find charged upon them in many passages in the Gospel. Thus particularly Matt. 23 and 23. Wo unto you, Scribes and Parisees, Hypocrites, for ye pay tithe of mint, anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Laying aside the commandments of God, they held the Tradition of men, as the washing of pots and cups, and many other such like things, Mark 7 and 8.— Thus we find the proud Pharisee (Luke 18 and 10) putting mighty confidence in his Fasting and Payment of Tithes, yet, at the same time, arrogantly justifying himself, and uncharitably condemning the poor Publican. There is, I am afraid, too much of this Leaven to be found operating

operating amongſt us, at this day. There are many formal Chriſtians, who are very punctual in the performances of the external acts of Religion, and yet, at the ſame time, intemperate, incontinent, unjuſt, unfaithful, or unmerciful. Theſe are of the Phariſaic ſtamp, they prefer Sacrifice to mercy; though God hath declared he will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, that is, Mercy before Sacrifice, when the preference muſt be given to the one or the other, and Mercy without Sacrifice, when they interfere, Mercy being the moſt excellent of all Sacrifices. (Sam. i. 15, 22) For behold, to obey is better than Sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.

THIRDLY.—As the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees was thus defective in reſpect of the ſubject, being confined only to the outward man, and in reſpect of the divine commandment, which are the rule or meaſure of it, as they made ſome of the laws of God of none effect by their Traditions, and poſtponed others of greater, to thoſe of leſs dignity, excellency and uſe; ſo there was another grand defect in this Righteouſneſs, in reſpect of the principle, from which it flowed, and the end at which it aimed.

aimed. The principles of true piety, are Faith and Charity; and the ends which it purſues, are the Glory of God, and the good of Man. But the grand principles from which this Phariſaic Righteouſneſs flowed, were Avarice, Ambition, and vain Glory; and the ends at which it aimed, were the promotion of ſome ſecular intereſt. They made piety ſtoop to their baſe and low deſigns, and devotion the inſtrument of impoſture and deceit. This is the character, which our Saviour himſelf gives of them: (Matt. 23, 5, 6) All their works they do to be ſeen of men; they make broad their Phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermoſt rooms at feaſts, and the chief ſeats in the Synagogues: (again v. 14) They devour widows' houſes, and, for a pretence, that is, for a cover for their avaricious deſigns, make long prayers. This is the very height of impiety, and yet, it is to be feared, that there are, at this day, too many Chriſtians, in name, that, in this reſpect, are no better than Phariſees; for whoſoever he be, whoſe primary principles of obedience are not Faith and Charity, or whoever admits any other ends or aims, whether of ſenſuality, avarice, vain-glory, or ambition, to come into competition with the glory

glory of God, and the general happineſs of mankind, with which the true intereſt of individuals is always inſeparably connected, his Righteouſneſs, proceeding from ſuch unworthy principles, and directed to ſuch low ends, is no better than that of a Phariſee. Thus we have briefly deſcribed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, and obſerved to you the particular notorious defects, that were in it; whence it will be eaſy to draw a character of that Righteouſneſs or Obedience, which in the Goſpel is required, not as the meritorious cauſe, but as a neceſſary condition of ſalvation.

This Righteouſneſs muſt be ſincere, internal, univerſal and perſevering: it muſt take in the whole man, and extend to all the divine commandments; it muſt flow from right principles, true Faith and Charity, meaning by Faith, a firm belief in God the Father, as our Creator, in God the Son, as our Redeemer, and in God the Holy Ghoſt, as he, that ſanctifieth the elect people of God; and by Charity, an exalted love of God for his own ſake; and of our brethren for his ſake, and their own, as being partakers of the ſame common nature and redemption

redemption with us. Our Righteouſneſs muſt be directed to right ends, the glory of God, and the good of Man. If we would enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, it muſt exceed the Righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees, ſo as to be free from all thoſe defects we have before mentioned; that is, we muſt obſerve all the precepts of the law of God, whether moral or poſitive, not making any of them void by the doctrines of men; not leaving undone the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and fidelity, as they did, nor thinking to atone for the neglect of ſome of them, be they more or leſs weighty, by our obſervance of the reſt.

THIS law we muſt obſerve not only in its full extent, ſo as to pay a due reſpect unto every command, but at all times, ſo that our obedience may be uniform and conſtant, as well as univerſal; and that not only according to the outward man, and in the letter, but alſo, ſo as to cleanſe our hearts from thoſe inward diſpoſitions, which are in God's ſight violations of his laws, and do defile the man. And the prime motive to this ſincere, conſtant, uniform, and univerſal obedience muſt be, not the praiſe

of men, nor the advancement of any ſecular intereſt, but the Glory of God, which chiefly intends the happineſs of his creatures in the enjoyment of himſelf. In a word, that Righteouſneſs or Obedience, which the Goſpel requires, as an indiſpenſible condition of Salvation, conſiſts in a ſtrict and conſtant obſervance of all thoſe duties, to which we are in any reſpect obliged; in doing all thoſe things, which we can, by any means, diſcover ourſelves bound to do; and in abſtaining from all thoſe actions, which we can, by any means, learn to be unbecoming in creatures, endued with thoſe faculties, which we find in ourſelves, and conſidered in thoſe circumſtances and relations, in which we are placed; and all this proceeding from a principle of Faith, working by Love. This is that Righteouſneſs, which, as we hope to find mercy with God at the day of trial, we muſt ſincerely endeavour to come up to. And ſuch is his mercy, that for our faith in Chriſt, and Love both of himſelf and our brethren, producing a ſincere repentance for our paſt ſins, and an obedience or righteouſneſs, approaching as near to this, as the infirmities of human nature will admit (for, indeed, all our

Righteouſneſs,

Righteouſneſs, when weighed in the balance of the ſanctuary, is but as filthy rags) he will clothe us in the indefectible Righteouſneſs of his Son, who did no ſin, neither was guile found in his mouth: He will waſh away thoſe ſtains, which, through theſe infirmities, adhere to the ſoul, in the blood of that immaculate Lamb, that was ſlain to take away the Sins of the world: But without ſuch a ſincere endeavour, we ſhall not find admiſſion into the Kingdom of Heaven.

THIRDLY.—This leads me to the third and laſt thing propoſed, viz. To excite you to the purſuit of this Righteouſneſs, by the argument ſuggeſted in the text, viz. The impoſſibility of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven without it. For, ſuppoſe the defect in our Righteouſneſs were this: That it was only external, as that of the Scribes and Phariſees, before deſcribed; in this caſe we rob God of that homage, which is principally due unto him, that of the Soul or Spirit; (Joh. 4, 24,) for God is a Spirit, and they that worſhip him, muſt worſhip him in Spirit and in Truth. As he is a Searcher of the heart, he requires the ſervice of the heart, and will be loved and obeyed with all

the powers and faculties of the Soul. (Rom. 2, 28,) For he is not a Jew, nor is he a Chriſtian, that is, one outwardly, neither is that Circumciſion, which is outward in the fleſh; but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly, and Circumciſion is that of the heart in the ſpirit, and not in the letter, whoſe praiſe is not of men but of God. The Epiſtle to the Hebrews tells us plainly, (Chap. xii. ver. 14.) That without Holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. God cannot bear the preſence of an impure ſpirit, nor can impure ſpirits bear the glories of that Spirit, whoſe purity and holineſs are like his eſſence, infinite. (Matt. 5, 8,) It is only to the pure in heart, that the promiſe of ſeeing God is made. He, therefore, that performs not the condition, upon which the promiſe is made, as he is not in his nature qualified for Beatitude, ſo neither hath he any title to expect the completion of that promiſe. In a word, he, whoſe religion is only external, is no better than a formal Hypocrite, and muſt expect to make his final abode with thoſe of the ſame denomination.

But, Secondly.—Suppoſe the defect in our Righteouſneſs was—that partiality, which was notorious

notorious in the Scribes and Phariſees, that we utterly diſregarded ſome of the Divine Commands, or preferred others of leſs, to thoſe of greater dignity and importance, thinking to expiate our omiſſion of the latter, by a punctual obſervance of the former; this defect would alſo exclude us out of the Kingdom of Heaven. From our Saviour's own declaration it appears, that it will not be ſufficient to plead the performance of the leſs, if we have omitted the more weighty matters of the Law; no, nor of the greater, if we have omitted the leſs. Thoſe things ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone. Let no man, therefore, think himſelf entitled to the character or reward of the righteous man, (Pſ. 119, 6,) that hath not an impartial reſpect unto all God's commandments. When there is a competition, ſo that both cannot be done, the more weighty muſt have the preference; otherwiſe that rule preſcribed by our divine Lawgiver is convertible with reſpect to both, the more and the leſs weighty matters of the Law, neither, except in the caſe juſt mentioned, ought to be left undone. (Ja. 2, 10, 11,) St. James hath aſſured us, that whoſoever ſhall keep the whole Law, with the

the exception of offending in one point only, is guilty of all. For every article in the law is enjoined by the ſame authority. He that ſaid, Do not commit adultery; ſaid alſo, Do not kill: Now if thou doſt not commit adultery, yet if thou killeſt, thou art become a tranſgreſſor of the law, and, conſequently, under the penalty of diſobedience. So that every tranſgreſſor of every, or any law of God, is equally under the ſentence of condemnation. (Duet. 27, 26.—Gal. 3, 10,) For curſed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Law to do them. I do not ſay, that he that offends in one point only, ſhall be equally puniſhed with the man, that offends in that point, perhaps, and in many more, equally criminal; (Luke 12, 47,) for ſome ſhall be beaten with many ſtripes, and ſome with few; but this I ſay, that the authority of the Lawgiver is as truly deſpiſed by the violation of any one, as of all his laws. He that will not be reſtrained from the violation of the law in one point; neither would he, under the like or equal temptation in another. He that diſobeys one command wilfully and deliberately, obeys none as he ought. If his obedience proceeded from the

fear

fear and love of God, theſe principles would reſtrain him equally in all caſes. He, therefore, that offends in one point, ſhews plainly, that his partial obedience does not proceed from the fear or love of God, or a deſire to pleaſe him, but from the abſence of temptation. And, where is the merit of being innocent, where there is no temptation to be otherwiſe? For virtue, I think, conſiſts in reſiſting the temptation either to do evil, or not to do good. Hence, we may learn, that it will little avail us to have been honeſt, juſt, generous, or charitable, if, at the ſame time, we have been habitually incontinent, intemperate or profane; or to have been free from theſe or any other vices, if, at the ſame time, we have been deſtitute of the former, or any other virtues. Suffer a man to indulge himſelf in the commiſſion of any one ſort of ſin, at one period of life, and of a different one at another, and in the end he will have run through the whole circle. Or let one man chuſe his favourite vice, and another his; and, for any thing I can ſee to the contrary, the world might be as wicked and as wretched (for wickedneſs always produces miſchief) as if God ſhould cancel our obligation to obſerve any

of

of his laws at all. He, therefore, that thinks, he may ſafely indulge himſelf in leſs impurities, if he do but abſtain from thoſe groſſer pollutions, that would expoſe him to contempt and correction, deceives himſelf. And he, that neglecting the weightier matters of the law, is very exact in the performance of thoſe of leſs conſequence, or he, that, obſerving the negative precepts, diſregards the poſitive, or obeying ſome of both kinds, diſobeys others, or any of either kind, ſuch a man plainly defeats his own expectation of entering into the Kingdom of Heaven. For it is then only, we can hope, that we ſhall not be aſhamed and confounded at the great day of account, when we have had an impartial reſpect unto all the divine commandments. This may ſeem to be an hard ſaying, but conſult your own natural ſentiments: Suppoſe a man to be under the dominion of any one vice only, pride, envy, malice, revenge, or any other, in this caſe, is he not an evil being? And are we not aſſured, that God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity with approbation, and that no evil can dwell with him? (Matt. 5, 19,) Whoſoever, therefore, ſhall break one of the leaſt of theſe commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the Kingdom of Heaven. LASTLY;

LASTLY. Suppoſe the defect in our Righteouſneſs to be this—That it flowed from carnal principles, concupiſcence, vain glory, avarice, or ambition, or were directed to ſecular ends, as it was in the Scribes and Phariſees, this defect alſo would effectually exclude us out of the heavenly Kingdom. He, that propoſes a reward of his obedience from the world, if he ſucceeds, he hath his reward: if not, yet he hath no title to a reward from God, that which he doth, not proceeding from any principle of obedience to God, nor being directed to his glory, can have no title neither in reaſon, nor in the Chriſtian covenant, to any reward from him. In this caſe a man idolizes his own vices, and makes himſelf a lawgiver to himſelf, and in thoſe particular inſtances, wherein he makes a formal piety ſubſervient to his low and baſe purſuits, inſtead of diminiſhing, he increaſes his guilt. (Matt. 23, 14,) For they, who, for a cover to their evil deſigns, make long prayers or in any other manner, affect an outſide form of godlineſs only, the ſame, we are aſſured, ſhall receive the greater damnation.

To what has now been ſaid it may not be unneceſſary here to add, that ſhould you ſuppoſe a man to have obeyed from the heart, and upon right principles, and to have had an impartial reſpect unto all the divine commandments; yet if he do not perſevere to the end of his life, he forfeits the benefit of his paſt obedience. (Matt. 10, 22,) For he, only, that endures to the end, ſhall be ſaved. (Ezek. 18, 24,) When the righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity; all his righteouſneſs that he hath done, ſhall not be mentioned; in his treſpaſs, that he hath treſpaſſed, and in his ſin, that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die. We are, therefore, exhorted to be ſteadfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, if we deſire, that our labour ſhould not be in vain in him. Glory, honour and peace, are promiſed to every man, that worketh good; but this promiſe ſuppoſeth, that they ſeek for theſe things, by (Rom. 2, 7,) patient continuance in well doing. We muſt be faithful unto death, if we would hope to inherit the Crown of Life. Be perſuaded, then, brethren, as you deſire to be admitted into the ſociety of Saints and Angels,

gels, and to the beatific Viſion of God, to ſuffer none of thoſe defects to be in your obedience, which vitiated that of the Scribes and Phariſees; to ſhun thoſe rocks, on which they ſuffered ſhipwreck; for that which excluded them, would alſo exclude you, and expoſe you to thoſe puniſhments, which God hath denounced againſt the diſobedient. Be perſuaded, therefore, to cleanſe yourſelves from all filthineſs, both of fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting Holineſs in the fear of God; uſing all diligence to make your calling and election ſure; adding to your faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge, and to knowledge, temperance, and to temperance, patience, and to patience, godlineſs, and to godlineſs, brotherly kindneſs, and to brotherly kindneſs, univerſal charity. For if theſe things be in you, and abound, they make you, that you ſhall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who being made perfect, is become the (Heb. 5, 9,) Author of eternal Salvation to all them only, that do obey him; to whom, therefore, with God, the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be given by us, and all mankind, all Honour, Adoration, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON VII.

SERMON VII.

Phil. Chap. iv. *Ver.* 13.—*I can do all Things through Chriſt, which ſtrengtheneth me.*

THERE are two falſe opinions, into one or the other of which many have been led, either by the great enemy of mankind, or their own corrupt hearts, it is to be feared, to their own perdition. There are ſome, who arrogantly pretend to an ability inherent in themſelves, to preſerve their own innocence, and perform their whole duty to God, their Neighbour and themſelves.—This ſelf-ſufficiency is the effect of pride, and leads to preſumption. Again, there are others, who affirm, on the contrary, that it is not in their power to take any part in the great and neceſſary buſineſs of working out their own Salvation. This exceſſive ſelf-diffidence proceeds ſometimes from puſillanimity and

and ſloth; but more frequently from their own corruptions, and from the dominion, which luſt and ſin, and the tempter, have uſurped over them. They cannot, becauſe they will not, fight manfully under the banner of Chriſt, the Captain of their Salvation, againſt theſe their ſpiritual enemies; and, therefore, they ſuffer themſelves to be led captive by them at their will, falling either into deſperation or into retchleſſneſs of moſt unclean living, no leſs perilous than deſperation, as it is juſtly ſaid of the Predeſtinarian in one of the articles of our church.

Both theſe are dangerous errors—errors in contrary extremes, and between theſe two there lies a golden mean, which is the truth, viz. that with the aſſiſtance of divine grace we are, as without it we are not able to perform acceptable obedience, and make our calling and election ſure. This is plainly implied in theſe words of St. Paul. "I can do all things through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens me." From which words, propoſitions may be raiſed, which, when explained and proved, may ſerve to correct the miſtakes of both the ſelf-fiduciary, who is perſuaded,

ſuaded, that he hath in himſelf thoſe powers and abilities, which he really never had; and of the ſlothful, who hides his talent in a napkin, and neglects the exertion of thoſe powers, which (if he would make a proper uſe of the divine aſſiſtance) would be found to be really in him. To correct theſe miſtakes, therefore, in a further diſcourſe on the words, I ſhall ſhew,

FIRST, That the Grace of God may be obtained by every one, that ſeeketh for it, as he ought.

SECONDLY, That by the aids of divine Grace we may be enabled to perform the conditions of the covenant, that God hath made with us in Chriſt Jeſus.

AND, Thirdly, That without this aſſiſtance from above, we are not, in our preſent lapſed eſtate, able to pleaſe him.

A few ſhort inferences, ſuch as naturally follow from theſe propoſitions, ſhall cloſe the Diſcourſe.

AND, Firſt, we are to ſhew that the grace of God may certainly be obtained by all thoſe that

ſeek

ſeek for it, as they ought. That God is moſt gracious and merciful, is a notion dictated by the light of nature; otherwiſe no man, whoſe mind had not been enlightened by Revelation, would ever have invoked his aid; and yet we all know, that the Heathens had their altars and their ſacrifices to propitiate his wrath, and obtain his favour; and that to their ſacrifices they joined their prayers to the ſame end. Now if the gracious aſſiſtances of the Holy Spirit of God, be the greateſt of all Bleſſings, and the moſt needful for us; then we may not doubt, but that, had the Heathens entertained a right notion of theſe things, they would have prayed for theſe ſpiritual, as for temporal bleſſings, with the ſame expectation of ſucceſs; being fully aſſured, that God, who ſo liberally beſtows upon his creatures the things that are leſs neceſſary, would not withhold thoſe that are infinitely more ſo. Now, this natural expectation in man, is a ſtrong proof, that God is as ready to beſtow ſpiritual, as temporal bleſſings, on all thoſe that deſire to pleaſe him.

But we need not thus argue from the dim light of reaſon: Revelation the clearer and ſurer guide,

guide, abounds with declarations of this truth, both in the Old and New Teſtament. For thus, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, the Lord God is a Sun, and a Shield: The Lord will give Grace and Glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." (Pſ. 84, 10,) Solomon, in like manner, hath aſſured us, that, "Though God ſcorneth the Scorners, yet he giveth Grace unto the Lowly;" which expreſſion is equivalent to that of St. James, "That God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." But not to dwell too long upon a truth ſo evident; hear what a greater than all theſe hath ſaid, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more ſhall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit to them that aſk him?" A gift this, in which all ſorts of grace, reſtraining, preventing, aſſiſting, juſtifying, and ſanctifying, are comprized: This is that Spirit, which ſanctifieth the elect people of God, by which the whole Church, and every ſound member thereof, is governed and ſanctified; by which we are ſtrengthened with might in the inner man; that very ſtrength of which the Apoſtle ſpeaks, by which he was enabled to do and ſuffer all thoſe things,

that

that were required of him, or which he was to undergo as a Chriſtian and an Apoſtle; that Comforter, whom, through the prayer of the Son, the Father hath given, and who is to abide with us for ever.

And now I can ſcarcely think it neceſſary to inform you, how, or by what means this Grace (concerning which we have ſhewn that it may be) is to be actually obtained. This hath been plainly intimated in what hath been already ſaid, and this you have been taught from your infancy: For, ſince we are not able to walk in all the commandments of God, nor to ſerve him, as we ought to do, without his ſpecial grace, we are, therefore, required, at all times, to call for it, by diligent, i. e. by fervent, daily, perſevering prayer. This our divine Teacher hath recommended, or rather enjoined in the very chapter, wherein he hath aſſured us, that our heavenly Father will give his holy Spirit to them, that aſk him; "Aſk, ſaith he, and ye ſhall have; ſeek and ye ſhall find; knock and it ſhall be opened unto you." Which repetitions, all of the ſame import, plainly point to that importunity, which he had recommended

in the verſe preceding. See Luke 11, 8, &c. But before I leave this point, I muſt obſerve, that he that would pray with ſucceſs, muſt pray with a full truſt in God's mercy, and with a fixed purpoſe of repentance and obedience; for God heareth not ſinners; but if any man be a worſhipper of God, and doth his will, him he heareth. He that thus aſketh, receiveth; he that thus ſeeketh, findeth; and to him that thus knocketh, it ſhall be opened. Let us, therefore, as the Author to the Hebrews exhorts, come boldly to the throne of Grace, not doubting but that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

And this leads to the ſecond thing propoſed, viz. To ſhew, that by the aid of divine Grace, we may be enabled to perform the conditions of the new covenant, and to pay that obedience to the divine Will, which God, through the merits of our Redeemer, will accept.

And this may be inferred from thoſe words of St. Paul in the text, "I can do all things through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens me:" By all things, meaning all acts, not of natural power,

power, but of obedience to the divine Will, ſuch as thoſe he had before mentioned. " I have learned, ſaith he, in whatſoever ſtate I am, therewith to be content: I know both how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound: Every where and in all things I am inſtructed, both to be full and to be hungry; both to abound and to ſuffer need." He had learned a proper temper, and conduct in every condition; contentment in poverty, moderation in affluence; patience in adverſity; humility and thankfulneſs in proſperity; in honour not to be exalted, in diſhonour not dejected; not diſcouraged by difficulties; nor diſmayed by dangers: to which he adds, in ſhort, " I can do all things through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens me." And may not other Chriſtians, think you, hope to be ſtrengthened by their Redeemer, as well as he? Surely, the Apoſtle doth not ſay theſe things by way of Oſtentation, but to encourage his beloved Philippians to pray for and expect the ſame Almighty aid. For this cauſe, ſaith he, in another place, I obtained mercy, that in me firſt Jeſus Chriſt might ſhew forth all long-ſuffering, for a pattern to them, which ſhould afterwards believe in him to life everlaſting. If in

him firſt, then ſurely in others after him. But what St. Paul means by all things, we may beſt learn from the words of our Saviour to his Apoſtles, juſt before his aſcenſion, when he gave them their commiſſion to go and teach all nations, "Baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt;" teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever he had commanded, i. e. the whole condition of the new covenant; in which faith muſt be included, according to St. Mark's account, of what our Saviour ſaid on the ſame occaſion: "Go ye into all the world and preach the Goſpel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized ſhall be ſaved; but he that believeth not, ſhall be damned." Hence, it follows, that the obedience, which our Lord requires, muſt include Faith; and alſo that the faith, which he requires, muſt include Obedience; as for the reaſon now aſſigned, viz. becauſe the Apoſtles were to teach all men to obſerve all things whatſoever he had commanded, and alſo becauſe faith is the natural parent of obedience, and is diſcerned by it as a tree by its fruit. And thus our preſent enquiry is reduced to this ſingle point; Whether a Chriſtian, aſſiſted by the Grace,

Grace, which we have ſhewn, may be obtained, can believe and obey the goſpel, according to the terms of the new covenant therein revealed, or he cannot: If it be denied, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is alſo vain. For, certainly, if he cannot with, much leſs can he without that aſſiſtance. On this ſuppoſition the condition of Salvation is become an impoſſible condition; and though Chriſt came into the world, that the world through him might be ſaved; yet no man could be ſaved by him: For, if a Chriſtian be not able to perform Evangelical obedience by thoſe aſſiſtances, which will be afforded him, if he ſeek for them as he ought, then, conſequently, he is ſtill incapable of Salvation by the ſecond covenant; then is the very end of Chriſt's coming into the world fruſtrate: And ſo the ſecond covenant will be found as weak as the firſt, there being no juſtification on this ſuppoſition to be had by either. Add to this, that he, who denies the propoſition we are now proving, plainly limits the almighty power of God, and makes all the precepts of obedience in the goſpel into mere abſurdities; ſince no command can bind an incapable ſubject. But this is not the language of the Scripture.

ture. Our Saviour aſſures St. Paul, and in him all Chriſtians, that his grace is ſufficient for them, and that his ſtrength is made perfect in weakneſs. Therefore, ſaith the Apoſtle, I do moſt gladly glory in infirmities, that the power of Chriſt may reſt upon me, therefore, I take pleaſure in infirmities, in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes, for Chriſt's ſake. For, when I am weak, then am I ſtrong. What need I tell of the Saints and Martyrs, and Confeſſors of old, who, through Faith, ſubdued kingdoms, wrought righteouſneſs, obtained promiſes, ſtopped the mouths of lions, quenched, or patiently endured the violence of fire, eſcaped the edge of the ſword, out of weakneſs were made ſtrong, turned to flight the armies of the Aliens, and were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection? Why ſhould we not then conclude, that by a right uſe of that ſtrength, which is afforded us, and a proper application for more, we may obtain Grace, whereby we may ſerve God acceptably, with reverence and Godly fear.

The gracious intention of God the Father, in ſending his Son, was, that we being delivered from

from our enemies might ſerve him without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs, before him all the days of our life; that we ſhould not be in bondage through fear of death all our lives long, conſidering ourſelves, as guilty criminals, and him as a ſevere avenging Judge; but that having received the ſpirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father, we ſhould be free from all fear, except, that of offending him. But if the grace, which may be obtained from or through him, be not ſufficient to enable us to fulfil the conditions of that Holy Covenant, which God the Father hath made with us in him, there is an end of all our hopes; ſervile and tormenting fears muſt needs revive, and nothing remains to us, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation.

But this is not the condition of a true Believer. The new covenant is a covenant of Grace and Mercy. To as many as received him, that is, Chriſt, to them, ſaith the Evangeliſt, gave he power to become the ſons of God, and of his fulneſs we have all received; for the law came by Moſes, but grace and truth by Jeſus Chriſt. Now, therefore, we are not under the law

law but under grace: Not under the rigour of legal performances, which ſoon concludes all under ſin, for curſed is every one, that continueth not in all things, that are written in the Book of the Law, to do them. No, the condition of the new covenant is not like that of an Egyptian Taſk-maſter, requiring the full tale of bricks, without any materials to make them of; no Phariſaical burthen laid heavy upon the ſhoulders, and grievous to be borne, without the aſſiſtance, ſo much as of a finger, to help to bear it: No, it is the performance of that duty; which Chriſt enables us to perform; the ſincerity of the honeſt heart, the doing all that our Chriſtian ſtrength will extend to, and placing the reſt to our Redeemer's account.

If, therefore, that which can be done, will be accepted, there is no room left for pretended impoſſibilities. For, though there are none but do ſometimes offend, even againſt the power, which they have or might have; yet in this caſe, there is a remedy in this covenant, viz. Repentance, which, as a city of refuge, gives ſecurity from avenging juſtice, after ſin committed. If, then, ſincere obedience be all that is required,

required, and that excludes no Chriſtian, be he ever ſo weak; if repentance will repair the defects of that ſincerity, and that excludes none, but the finally impenitent, that live and die indulgent to their ſins; then, certainly, no man can doubt the ſufficiency of that ſtrength which cometh from Chriſt, to enable all true Believers to make their calling and election ſure. In ſhort, Chriſt himſelf repreſents his yoke as eaſy, and his burden as light. And, indeed, this is a yoke, which when it is put on, removes all other yokes; and renders him, that was heavy laden, lighter than he was before. And, therefore, our Saviour does not lay it upon his diſciples by way of injunction, but recommends it to them, as a thing, that any prudent man would take up out of choice. "Come unto me, ſaith he, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you reſt. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly, and ye ſhall find reſt to your ſouls; for my yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light." Light, not, indeed, on account of any ſtrength inherent in us to bear it, but light in compariſon of the burden of ſin, and made much lighter by the gracious aſſiſtances made over to us in the Goſ-

pel. For, though there are in all men certain natural powers, enabling them to perform all human actions, that are merely ſuch; and alſo, ſome moral principles, the weak remains of that reſtitude, in which we were originally created; ſuch as that of Conſcience, by which we are enabled, in many inſtances, to diſtinguiſh between right and wrong; diſpoſed to that, which is good, and reſtrained from evil; yet as there is a neceſſity for ſupernatural ſtrength, in order to the attainment of a ſupernatural end, for which, thoſe other natural powers and moral principles are altogether inſufficient; it is abſolutely neceſſary, that we call in thoſe divine aſſiſtances, which were made over to us, not at our firſt, but ſecond birth; and by this acceſſion, the weak and languid, (I might ſay, dead) ſoul revives; he that was before inſufficient to think any thing, is enabled to do all things pertaining to his ſalvation through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens him. And thus is verified that ſaying of our bleſſed Saviour, "All things are poſſible to them, that believe."

THUS have I ſhewn you, wherein the Chriſtian's great ſtrength lies; "The Lord is his Strength

Strength and his Redeemer: Yet this doctrine doth, by no means, annihilate the human agency in the great work of their ſalvation. For if man could not take any part in that work, as ſome have affirmed; then it would have been abſurd to have laid any commands or injunctions upon him; and yet the Holy Scripture abounds with them; "Strive to enter in at the ſtrait gate." "Labour not for the meat which periſheth, but for that, which endureth unto eternal life." "Give diligence to make your calling and election ſure; but how ſhould he ſtrive and labour, and give diligence, who is ſuppoſed to be unable to do any thing? How improperly are ſuch commands impoſed on a ſuppoſition of abſolute impotence? If there be in every man a power to do evil; but none to do good, how wretched, alas, are we! But though without a power from above, which we ſhall never want, if we be not wanting to ourſelves, we could not, yet with it we can.

THE Apoſtle ſpeaking of himſelf and the reſt of the firſt Preachers of the Goſpel, hath theſe words: "We then, as workers together with God, beſeech you, that ye receive not the grace

of God in vain;" and hence, it will follow, that they, as well as the Apoſtles, may be workers together with God. And who would not chooſe to work with ſuch a glorious and mighty Coadjutor?

I might go on to quote texts almoſt without number, from which man's power to do ſomething towards his own ſalvation, at leaſt after grace received, might be inferred. But I ſhall only mention that of St. Paul to the Philippians, 2, 12, 13. "Work out your own Salvation with fear and trembling, becauſe it is God, which worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleſaure." So then God's working in us both to will and to do, is not a hinderance, but a furtherance to our working. Otherwiſe, there would be an abſurdity in the Apoſtles exhortation. For, though we could do nothing without his grace, yet if this grace ſtrengthens our weakneſs, which implies ſome degree of power, it doth not take away that power, how weak ſoever it be, but renders it ſufficient for the good purpoſes, for which it was intended. He that bears the lighter end is an agent, though he alone could not have borne the whole burden.

This

This doctrine may poſſibly be in ſome ſort illuſtrated by numbers; one million, multiplied by two units, will produce two millions; this product, which bears the ſame proportion to the leſſer factor as the greater to unity, will not be the reſult of the multiplication of the one million by any other factor. Now, though there is a vaſt diſproportion between theſe two factors, and, conſequently, in their efficiency in that production, yet the leſs remains a factor ſtill, and bears its part: In like manner the human power, in the production of any act of obedience to the divine will, how little ſoever it be, is not entirely loſt in the divine aſſiſtance and co-operation; otherwiſe, man would be a mere inſtrument, not a free agent; and there would not be in him, even after grace received, ſo much as a fitneſs of congruity, for the reception of a reward; and when that joyful ſentence ſhall be pronounced on every of thoſe on the right hand at the laſt great day, "Well done thou good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." I ſee not upon what foundation either the character or conſequent reward could

be

be appropriated to himſelf by the beſt man that ever lived; nor on the ſame ſuppoſition of a total inability can there be any ground for the puniſhment of diſobedience; and then, how ſhall God judge the world?

A Holy obedience is the effect of grace given and received, God is the giver; man the receiver; and receiving is doing, as well as giving. The grace of God doth not, at leaſt not ordinarily, operate irreſiſtibly; if it did, there would be no ſuch thing as diſobedience in the world. For with God there is no reſpect of perſons; there is no partiality in him; but ſome are obedient, others diſobedient. Therefore, there is in man, a power to receive this grace or not to receive it; to uſe it when received, or to receive it in vain.

Let no man, therefore, ſay, that he can contribute nothing towards his own ſalvation, for, though it ſhould be true, that before grace given he cannot, yet moſt certainly, after it is received, he may. To talk with more preciſion on a ſubject ſo very abſtruſe and delicate, would be preſumption. There is no determining proportions

portions here. No doubt the human agency in this great affair, though ſomewhat in itſelf, is as nothing in reſpect of the divine; and comparatively ſpeaking, or in the language of Humility, may be counted, as nothing.

And this may ſerve to explain to us thoſe ſeeming contradictions, that are to be met with in the writings of St. Paul. "I am crucified with Chriſt, ſaith he, nevertheleſs, I live; yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me." And, again, "By the grace of God, I am, what I am; and his grace, which was beſtowed upon me, was not in vain, but I laboured more abundantly than they all; yet not I, but the grace of God, which was with me;" herein not denying his own labours, but attributing them principally to the grace of God, it being the peculiar Idiom of the Hebrew language, when two things ſtand in competition with each other, to give the preference to one by ſeeming to reject the other. We all know, that God had ſtrictly enjoined ſacrifices under the law; yet when they come into competition with mercy, then he ſaith, "I will have mercy and not ſacrifice;" only to let us know, that mercy

is

is infinitely more acceptable to him, and more excellent in itſelf than ſacrifice: For, behold, to obey is better than ſacrifice, and to hearken, than the fat of rams.

And thus, I think, we may ſafely determine the meaning of St. Paul's words, without the fear of an objection; "I can do all things through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens me;" i. e. not I alone, nor I principally; being abſolutely impotent in myſelf, as to any ſupernatural duty, but having received ſtrength from Chriſt, or from the Holy Spirit of God through him, I am then able to do all thoſe things which are required of me, ſo as to find acceptance with God. For, after ſpiritual ſtrength and power thus received, actual obedience is the work both of Chriſt and of the Chriſtian, who may truly ſay, in the ſenſe explained, I live, yet not I, but Chriſt liveth in me; I labour, yet not I, but the grace of God, which is with me; but without this grace the man would either not labour at all, or his labour would be vain. For without it, it is not in the power of man to defend himſelf againſt temptation, nor to perform that obedience, that is required of him.

Thirdly.

THIRDLY. This is the laſt point to be proved; and the proof of it will require but little of your time or my pains. Many of the authorities before quoted, prove it beyond contradiction. St. Paul would not have added through Chriſt which ſtrengthens me, if he could have performed his whole duty without any ſtrength derived from Chriſt. He hath alſo told us, that "of ourſelves we are not able to think any thing as of ourſelves, and that our ſufficiency is of God." But I need not repeat any more of theſe; hear the doctrine confirmed out of our Saviour's own mouth: "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, ſhall be rooted up." Mat. 15, 13. No man can come unto me, except the Father, which hath ſent me, draw him. John 6, 44. Which words are repeated and thus explained; v. 65. "No man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father." Again, "I am the true Vine, and my Father is the Huſbandman. Every branch in me, that beareth not fruit he taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit; abide in me and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it

abide in the Vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the Vine, ye are the Branches: He that abideth in me and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me, ye can do nothing." John 15. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

THESE words need no comment—they both explain and prove this laſt propoſition; and between them and the doctrine of the Church of England, there is a perfect harmony, as you may ſee in her 10th and 13th articles.

"And hence it follows, that we have no power to do good works, pleaſant and acceptable to God without the grace of God, by Chriſt preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will." Vid. the articles.

FOURTHLY. Let us now conſider the inferences that may be drawn from theſe doctrines:

AND, firſt, if without faith in Chriſt, and ſtrength from above, we are not able to work out our own ſalvation; nor, indeed, to contribute any thing towards it: Then we may plainly diſcern the pernicious tendency of the Pelagian doctrine,

doctrine. The words of the founder of that ſect, in our language, are to this effect: "No man ſhall ever be able to take away from me the power of my own free will; leaſt, if God himſelf ſhould be admitted an aſſiſtant in my own works, no reward ſhould be due to me, but to him, who wrought them in me."

THESE men chuſe to be trafficking for Heaven upon their own ſtock; they will not be obliged to grace and mercy, even for their own ſalvation, they have not yet learned what that meaneth; "Bleſſed are the poor in ſpirit; for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Nor do they attend to what Solomon, and after him St. James hath ſaid, viz. "God reſiſteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble." Theſe men receive Chriſt Jeſus as a partial miniſter of truth, but not at all of Grace, as a teacher that came from God, at leaſt, with reſpect to his moral doctrines; but reject the truths delivered by him, concerning himſelf. What is this, I pray, but inſolence and mockery, ſomething like bowing the knee before him, and then ſmiting him on the face? We muſt receive Chriſt in all his offices, or we might as well

receive him in none; we muſt receive him not only as a Prieſt and a King; as a Redeemer, Mediator and Interceſſor, by whom all divine bleſſings and graces are diſpenſed to us. He, that rejects him in any one relation, denies him; and he that denies him before men, him will he alſo deny before his Father, which is in Heaven. In ſhort, without receiving whole Chriſt we ſhall be like Agrippa, but almoſt Chriſtians, i. e. no Chriſtians at all. Let us, therefore, be careful to add humility to our obedience, ever attending to what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches, and in particular to what the faithful and true Witneſs ſaith unto the Church of the Laodiceans: "Becauſe thou ſayeſt I am rich and increaſed with goods, and have need of nothing, and knoweſt not that thou art wretched, and miſerable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counſel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, i. e. the truths, which God hath taught us by his Son, that thou mayeſt be rich; and white raiment, i. e. the Righteouſneſs, which is of God by Faith, that thou mayeſt be clothed, and that the ſhame of thy nakedneſs do not appear; and to anoint thine eyes

eyes with eye-ſalve, i. e. Humility, that thou mayeſt ſee. So then they, that think they ſee, and that they have need of nothing, may yet be blind, and wretched, and poor, and naked. From ſuch vain ſelf-deluſion, ſuch ſpiritual pride and poverty, good Lord deliver us!

The ſecond propoſition, viz. That with the aſſiſtance of divine grace, we may perform acceptable obedience, overcome the world, and be more than conquerors over Sin, Satan and Death, may ſerve to invigorate the ſlothful, the fearful and feeble minded. Chriſt's yoke is eaſy and his burden light. There are no impoſſibilities in the way of our duty; but what our own ſloth or groundleſs fears create. It may, indeed, be neceſſary in our Chriſtian warfare, that we ſometimes ſubmit to labour, expence and danger; but there are very few, that would not rather beg and dig too than ſtarve; few that at ſome time of life would not give the whole world, had they it to give, rather than not purchaſe the Pearl of great Price. And there is no wiſe man, that will not expoſe himſelf to any labour, expence or danger, rather than to that of periſhing everlaſtingly. Where

more

more than ordinary difficulties occur, as ſometimes they do, a proportionable addition of ſtrength will be ſupplied. There hath no temptation taken you, ſaith the Apoſtle, but ſuch as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will, with the temptation alſo, make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it. And God himſelf hath ſaid, I will never leave thee nor forſake thee.

But, indeed, theſe difficulties do chiefly ariſe from the prepoſſeſſion of vice; from our own evil habits of long continuance; and theſe, like the ſkin of the Æthiopian, are not eaſily changed. There is, however, ſomething of hyperbole in this compariſon, The moral change through the aſſiſtance of divine Grace, is not quite ſo difficult. A vigorous reſolution, in conjunction with this aſſiſtance from above, will do great things. Scorn then to be any longer bound in fetters of your own forging. Exert the great ſtrength you have, or may have; for, it is to be hoped, it is not yet finally taken away; and then theſe chains, like the cords, with which Samſon had ſuffered himſelf to be bound, will

will fly off, like threads of tow touched with the fire. Watch ye, therefore, ſtand faſt in the Faith, quit yourſelves like men, be ſtrong, and to your prayers, for the divine aſſiſtance, add your own beſt endeavours to do your duty, and you will be ſure to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

But, if on the other hand, you will not ſo much as conſider the great end for which you were born, will attend to every thing, but the one thing needful; ſpend your time in the conſtant purſuit of gain, or pleaſure and idle amuſements; either not labour yourſelves or not invoke the divine aſſiſtance in the purſuit of the Pearl of great Price; then will the profeſſed Chriſtian find himſelf weak, and be as another man, and his deſtruction will be from himſelf.

This, then, is the ſecond inference, we muſt labour for that meat, which endureth to everlaſting life, or we can never obtain it. God, indeed, may work in us, but he cannot work with us, if we will not work with him.

Third. But neither will our beſt endeavours be attended with the deſired ſucceſs, without the

the addition of our moſt importunate addreſſes to the throne of Grace. For, though God often prevents us with his bleſſings, yet the end will not ordinarily be obtained without the uſe of the appointed means. Our bleſſed Lord hath made aſking the condition of receiving; and St. James hath aſſigned our not aſking, as the cauſe of our not receiving; not that God is ignorant of our wants or weakneſs. He knows them better than we do; nor that he can be teaſed or wearied, like the unjuſt judge, into a compliance, which his own goodneſs would not prompt him to; but to keep up in our minds a lively ſenſe of our conſtant, whole dependance upon him; to put us in mind of the neceſſity of a holy obedience to his will, knowing that the prayers of the wicked are an abomination unto him, and that if our hearts incline unto wickedneſs, he will not hear our prayers.

For theſe, and many other wiſe reaſons, it hath pleaſed God to require this duty from us: And, though he ſhould not immediately return a gracious anſwer, yet are we ſtill to pray and not to faint, i. e. not through ſloth or diffidence

to

to ſuſpend our humble addreſſes to him, for ſtrength to ſupport our weakneſs, and for his grace and mercy, both to forgive our ſins, and to ſupply our wants: If we do, we deprive ourſelves of that alliance, on which our ſafety abſolutely depends; for without him we can do nothing. If we have been long deaf to the dictates of conſcience, to all the calls of Grace, to all the ſuggeſtions of God's Holy Spirit, if we have long refuſed to hearken to the powerful voice of his word, and the importunate exhortations of his miniſters; is it a wonder that he ſhould hide away his face, and withhold the light of his countenance for a time, till we become thoroughly ſenſible of our former guilt and folly, and reſolve to be more ſtedfaſt in his covenant: till knowing our own weakneſs, we are determined to cleave to him with all our hearts, and to hold ourſelves faſt by him for the time to come? If, then, God ſhould not immediately return a gracious anſwer to our prayers, we muſt perſevere and watch unto prayer, notwithſtanding; and knowing that we are ſet in the midſt of ſo many and great dangers; that without him we cannot but fall; that without him we are not able to pleaſe him; that through

the weakneſs of our mortal nature, we can do no good thing without him; that our enemies are ſo many and ſo mighty, come on ſo faſt and are ſo maliciouſly ſet againſt us; it will be our wiſdom to multiply our petitions, that his Holy Spirit may, in all things, direct and rule our hearts, that he would mercifully look upon our infirmities, turn from us all thoſe evils, that we moſt righteouſly have deſerved, that we may be defended from all adverſities, which may happen to the body, and from all evil thoughts which may aſſault and hurt the ſoul; and that he would grant us the help of his grace, that in keeping his commandments we may pleaſe him both in will and deed.

If we thus pray, and thus continue to pray, ſuggeſting to our own thoughts the ſtrongeſt motives to humility, and to his, the moſt powerful inducements to extend his grace and mercy to us, we ſhall not finally fail of ſucceſs; for our God is a God that heareth prayer, and to him ſhall all fleſh come; and they, that thus come, ſhall not come in vain.

Lastly. One other reaſon of God's requiring us to call upon him for a conſtant ſupply

of

of grace, as for all other bleſſings and mercies, is, that when we have received a gracious anſwer to our prayers, we ſhould pay that tribute of praiſe and thankſgiving, that is ſo juſtly due unto him. Call upon me in the time of trouble, ſaith He, by the Pſalmiſt, and I will deliver thee, and thou ſhalt glorify me." The firſt of theſe clauſes contains an invitation, the ſecond, a promiſe of deliverance, and the laſt, a ſtrict and poſitive command; our compliance with which, is a moſt natural inference from what hath been ſaid in this diſcourſe. For, if without the grace of God preventing, aſſiſting, and ſanctifying us, we could not work out our own ſalvation; if this grace may be certainly obtained, and with it we ſhall be enabled to make our calling and election ſure; how can we forbear crying out with the Pſalmiſt, "Bleſs the Lord, O! my ſoul, and all that is within me bleſs his holy name. Bleſs the Lord, O! my ſoul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgiveth all thine iniquities, and healeth all thy diſeaſes, who redeemeth thy life from deſtruction, and crowneth thee with loving kindneſs and tender mercies." When we conſider what ſalvation means, that it is a deliverance from

the wrath of God, from ſin and everlaſting miſery, the juſt puniſhment of ſin, that it implies a reconciliation with God, and the enjoyment of eternal happineſs in the viſion of him, our hearts muſt be void of all ſenſe of gratitude, if we are not ſtrongly diſpoſed to glorify God, by the beſt teſtimony of its ſincerity, an holy obedience.

Let us, therefore, hence learn to put our whole truſt in God, to call upon him for his grace and mercy, to give him due thanks and praiſe, for all the benefits we have received at his hands, always firmly reſolved, through Chriſt, which ſtrengthens us, ſo to glorify God here, that we may be for ever happy with him hereafter, through the ſame Jeſus Chriſt our Lord;—to whom, with the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen*.

SERMON VIII.

John xi. *v.* 25, 26.—*I am the Reſurrection and the Life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die.*

THESE words are part of the diſcourſe that paſſed between Martha, the ſiſter of Lazarus, and our bleſſed Saviour upon his return into Judea from beyond Jordan; whither he had for a time retired from the perſecution of the Jews. The occaſion of his return, as appears from the context, was the death of Lazarus. This event he wiſely makes uſe of, both to prove his divine miſſion, and alſo to communicate to the world ſome further knowledge of the dignity of his perſon, and the power and happy conſequences of faith in him; at the

ſame

ſame time confirming the faith and comforting the hearts of all true believers. I am the Reſurrection and the Life, that is, I am the cauſe or Author of the Reſurrection and eternal Life, the effect being here put for the cauſe. Of this manner of ſpeaking there are frequent examples to be found both in the old and new Teſtament: Thus we find a paſſage parallel to this, Cor. i. v. 1, 30, where the Apoſtle, ſpeaking of Chriſt, ſaith, that he of God is made unto us wiſdom, and righteouſneſs, and ſanctification, and redemption; that is, the Author of all theſe bleſſings. When, therefore, our Saviour ſaith thus of himſelf, I am the Reſurrection and the Life, and he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live; yea, and whoſoever liveth and believeth in me ſhall never die. His meaning is, that whoſoever liveth and believeth in him, though he were dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, yet ſhall he be born again, and live a new and ſpiritual life, a life that ſhall never be extinguiſhed in him. Yea, though a true believer muſt die a natural death, yet ſhall he live again, i. e. his body ſhall be raiſed to life by the mighty power of God, and reunited to his ſoul, never more to be divorced; but on

the

the contrary, to remain immortal, and for ever happy in the enjoyment of God himſelf. With reſpect to the ſpiritual life, the true believer never dies; and with reſpect to the natural, he ſhall not die for ever. The life of grace, which is begun in Faith, ſhall have neither intermiſſion nor end; and though the natural life, or life of the body be interrupted by death, yet ſhall it be renewed in the morning of the reſurrection. The body ſhall not periſh for ever.

THIS I take to be the full and plain ſenſe of the words, from which I ſhall take occaſion. Firſt, to ſhew the nature of that Faith, to which our Saviour aſcribes ſuch ſurpriſing effects, as that it hath a power to give beginning to ſuch a life in the believer, as ſhall not have either end or intermiſſion; and to aſcertain the reſurrection of the mortal body to an immortal life in Glory. Secondly, To prove the certainty of the reſtoration of life to the body, that part of us, which, through ſin, is become ſubject to death and corruption. Thirdly, To enquire into the nature and certainty of that ſpiritual life, which death cannot interrupt. And, laſtly, to draw ſuch inferences from theſe propoſitions,

propoſitions, as naturally flow from the doctrines contained in them. And, firſt, I am to deſcribe the nature of that Faith to which our bleſſed Saviour aſcribes thoſe infinitely ſurpriſing and equally deſirable effects juſt mentioned. Now, Faith, in general, is an aſſent of the mind to a teſtimony. Religious Faith, therefore, muſt be an aſſent of the mind to a divine teſtimony, and, therefore, muſt comprehend in its object, all Revelation; that is, all thoſe divine truths, that are contained in the holy Scriptures, that God hath from time to time revealed, firſt by his Prophets, and afterwards by his Son Jeſus Chriſt and his Apoſtles; the ſum and ſubſtance of which may be reduced to the following general propoſitions: That there is a God, who made the world and all the things that are therein; that man, by his own tranſgreſſion, fell from that ſtate of innocence and happineſs, in which he was created; that God was pleaſed to contrive a wonderful redemption for him, in order to his reſtoration to the happineſs, from which he was fallen; that this redemption was wrought by the only begotten Son of God, who took our nature upon him, and therein gave glory to God by a full and perfect

perfect obedience to the divine law, and by his meritorious death and ſufferings, made a full, perfect, and ſufficient ſacrifice and ſatisfaction for the ſins of the whole world; that for this his infinite condeſcenſion, God hath raiſed him from the dead, highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, and all power both in Heaven and Earth; in conſequence of which, he ſent down the Holy Ghoſt to enlighten the underſtandings, and purify the hearts of all true Believers, and to aſſure them of the truth of all the doctrines revealed by him, and particularly of the certainty of their own reſurrection. And thus he is become the Reſurrection and the Life, that is, the Author of both, to as many, as believe in and obey him; I add, obey; becauſe a bare aſſent of the mind to theſe truths, as mere ſpeculations, is not that Faith which juſtifies, or gives us grounds to hope for the remiſſion of our ſins, and a joyful reſurrection to eternal life; for Faith without works is dead. The true juſtifying Faith always works by love, and overcomes the world. The tenor of the promiſes in Chriſt, and the offers of ſalvation made unto us in the goſpel are conditional;

and he cannot be ſaid to believe a divine Revelation, who lays hold on the promiſes, but rejects the conditions, upon which thoſe promiſes are made in that revelation; and, therefore, you will always find ſome word or clauſe, intimating the neceſſity of obedience as well as Faith, added by Commentators in their paraphraſes upon thoſe paſſages, which aſcribe ſalvation to Faith or truſt in Chriſt, as the Meſſiah, that heretofore was to come, and long ſince actually did come, into the world to be the Redeemer of mankind. Thus, in the 6th chapter of St. John's Goſpel, verſe 47, where it is ſaid, he, that believeth on me, hath everlaſting life; a certain Commentator very juſtly adds theſe words, with a reſolution to fulfil the conditions ſtipulated and required in the new covenant; reſtraining the title to everlaſting life to ſuch only, as embrace the covenant, God hath made with us in Chriſt, and, alſo, intends to fulfil the conditions propoſed. So again, chap. 5, ver. 24, where our Saviour is delivering the ſame doctrine in the words following: Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him, that ſent me, hath everlaſting life; immediately after the words, "believeth

lieveth on him that ſent me," another Commentator adds, with a purpoſe of obedience; and proves, that believing muſt be conceived to imply obedience from the 29th verſe of the ſame chapter, where it is ſaid, that at the laſt day, the dead ſhall hear the voice of the Son of God, and come forth, they that have done good to the reſurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the reſurrection of damnation. And, laſtly, a third tells us, that when our Saviour ſaith here in the text, he, that liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die; he ſpeaks of ſuch, whoſe faith is operative and laſting. I might go on, to make many more ſuch quotations, but theſe are ſufficient to ſhew, that he, who ſo believeth on the the Son of God, as to have a title to a joyful reſurrection to everlaſting life, and to have now begun to live the life, that ſhall neither have intermiſſion nor end, muſt add to his faith, obedience; and, accordingly, our Saviour is repreſented in the epiſtle to the Hebrews, as the Author of eternal Salvation to them only, that do obey him. And, indeed, though ſome have built ſtrange preſumptions on thoſe paſſages of Scripture, that aſcribe ſuch mighty benefits to Faith, as if a bare aſſent of

the mind to the truths revealed in the Goſpel, were ſufficient to entitle them to the favour and mercy of God, yet all thoſe preſumptions are groundleſs. Holineſs muſt be implied in the very notion of Faith, ſince it is one of thoſe truths, that without Holineſs no man ſhall ſee the Lord. All theſe arguments we might further ſtrengthen by obſerving, that the very end of religion is defeated by the contrary doctrine, and that Holineſs, which being an habit, cannot be acquired without repeated acts of obedience, is abſolutely neceſſary to qualify a man for the enjoyment of his Maker. But theſe, after ſo many plain and undeniable proofs alledged, we think it unneceſſary to inſiſt upon. What has been ſaid, may be ſufficient to ſhew the nature of that Faith, in which whoſoever hath lived, though he were dead, yet ſhall he live. And, this leads me to the ſecond propoſition, viz. To prove the certainty of the reſtoration of life to that part of us, which, through ſin, is become ſubject to death and corruption. And here it muſt be obſerved, that ſome have ventured to affirm the thing to be impoſſible, and, therefore, I think it neceſſary to lay before you ſuch conſiderations, as prove the poſſibility of a

Reſurrection;

Reſurrection; and then the arguments, for the certainty of it, will have the greater weight with you. A different ſpecies of beings might, perhaps, conclude it utterly impoſſible, that ſuch creatures, as we are, could ever be formed. But as we were created and are now exiſting, that very creation infers a poſſibility of reſtoration; it being evident to the meaneſt capacity, that what hath been, may be; and that the reſtitution of any thing to its firſt eſtate, is more eaſy to be conceived in the nature of things, than the firſt production of it. There are, it muſt be owned, ſome difficulties in the thing, to a finite capacity ſeemingly inſuperable; but then we are to conſider, who it is, concerning whom the Scripture ſaith, that he is the Reſurrection and the Life, and when we find, that it is he, to whom all power in Heaven and Earth is given, that knoweth all things, and that without him there was not any thing made, that was made; when we thus find infinite power and knowledge in the workman, we ſhall not doubt, but that theſe attributes will be an overmatch for ſome apparent difficulties in the work. There is a greater wonder than this to be ſeen in all natural productions; and

ſuch

ſuch they would be thought, did not the frequency of the thing take off the ſurpriſe. A grain of wheat is not quickened except it die, yet this grain will produce many more of the ſame kind. And, is not the miracle of a Reſurrection as many times repeated in ſuch a production? St. Paul, therefore, did very juſtly reply to the Unbeliever, with ſome degree of indignation: Thou fool, that, which thou ſoweſt, is not quickened except it die; as if he had ſaid: Thou, who conſidereſt not the infinite power of God, conſider thoſe grains of corn, which thou burieſt under the clods of the the earth; doſt thou not expect they will ſpring up again with advantage? Yet theſe grains are not quickened, nor do they produce others of the ſame kind, except they die; and are not theſe, at leaſt, an annual emblem of the Reſurrection? And, why then ſhould the corruption of the human body make the reſurrection of it impoſſible? Will not God take as much care to reſtore the bodies of men after a revelation of his determinate purpoſe ſo to do, as he doth to raiſe up the corn, which he reſtores only for their ſakes? Why then ſhould it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God ſhould raiſe

raiſe the dead! The evidences, on which the Faith of Martha muſt have depended, were but an uncertain tradition, one obſcure prophecy in Iſaiah, another in Ezekiel, and a third in Daniel, which laſt ſpeaks of many riſing, but doth not expreſſly ſay, that all ſhall riſe again. The Phariſees, indeed, believed; but the Sadducees denied, the doctrine of a Reſurrection. Amidſt theſe obſcurities and uncertainties, could ſhe ſay, ſhe knew, that there ſhould be a Reſurrection in the laſt day? What then ſhall hinder us from believing it, who live after the actual Reſurrection of our Redeemer from the dead, which proves the certainty and neceſſity of our Reſurrection. For, conſider him as the firſt Fruits, as the Head of his church, or as the Judge of quick and dead; and in all theſe relations you will find a general Reſurrection to be a neceſſary conſequence. The very notion of firſt fruits infers, the Ingathering of the ſucceeding harveſt; the idea of a head, ſuppoſes the exiſtence and union of the body; and that of a judge, the appearance of the parties to be judged by him. Do then all natural productions ſhew the poſſibility of a Reſurrection: Doth the Reſurrection of Chriſt prove the neceſſity

ceſſity of it; did the Apoſtles venture their lives in preaching it, and ſtand in jeopardy every hour for the hope of it; and, who then, can doubt the certainty of a reſurrection? If by one man's ſin came death, why ſhould not, by one man's righteouſneſs, come alſo the Reſurrection of the dead? In ſhort, this article of our creed ſeems to have been eſtabliſhed upon evidence abundantly ſufficient to gain the aſſent of any unprejudiced mind; and if that axiom of the father's be juſt, that one word from God challenges our belief, then much more ready ſhould we be to pay that homage of our underſtandings to his teſtimony, when he condeſcends to enter into a ſort of diſputation with us, the more effectually to prove the truth of his own revelation? He, therefore, that is a true believer in Chriſt, though he ſhould die, yet ſhall he live, and be raiſed again at the laſt day. Nay, what is more, that Faith ſhall beget in him ſuch a life of grace, as ſhall neither have intermiſſion nor end. He, that liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die: How can that be, you will ſay; do not all men, believers and unbelievers, die? Is it not appointed unto all men once to die? Yes. Yet our Saviour perſiſts in the ſame declaration:

declaration: You will find him more than once repeating it in this Goſpel by St. John. Thus, in the 5th chapter, 24th verſe: Verily, I ſay unto you, he that heareth my words, and believeth on him, that ſent me, hath everlaſting life, and ſhall not come into condemnation, but is paſſed from death unto life; that is, he now hath and is already paſſed from death unto life. I know ſome Commentators are of opinion, that when it is ſaid, ſuch a one hath everlaſting life, no more is meant, than that he hath a right to it. But this cannot poſſibly be all that our Saviour deſigned by that expreſſion. Many a man hath a right to that, which he never attains to the poſſeſſion of; and if we thus explain it, we ſhall be forced to do violence to the words, and read, not he is paſſed, but he ſhall paſs, from death unto life. You will, however, find him again expreſſing himſelf in the ſame ſtrain in the next chap. ver. 51: I am the living Bread, which came down from Heaven: If any man eat of this Bread, he ſhall live for ever; and again, ver. 54: Whoſo eateth my fleſh and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and again, ver. 58: Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead; he, that eateth of

this bread, ſhall live for ever. There muſt be ſomething more in never dying, in having everlaſting life, and in being paſſed from death unto life, than only having a title to everlaſting life; and ſo in truth there is: For, by Faith everlaſting life is already begun; the life of Saints in Heaven is commenced on earth: There is a life of grace in a true Believer, which is not interrupted by death; the conſummation of that ſpiritual life indeed is future, but the earneſt and foretaſte, nay, the very formal exiſtence of it, is (though but in an imperfect manner) actually preſent to every true Believer.— Chriſt liveth in him, and he in Chriſt. There is a ſupernatural union betwixt the ſpirit of Chriſt and the Soul of a true Believer, from which union the ſpiritual, as from the union of the ſoul and body, the natural life, reſults.— And, therefore, St. Paul boldly defies even death itſelf, to ſeparate him from the love of Chriſt, that is, not from his love of Chriſt, but Chriſt's love of him. Death can, indeed, ſeparate the ſoul from the body, but not from its Redeemer. In this reſpect therefore the Believer never dies, but is by death immediately tranſlated to a nearer and more intimate union with

with the Fountain of Life and Happineſs. A certain modern Writer hath interpreted thoſe laſt words of the text, ſhall never die, in a very different manner. He limits them to ſuch only, as ſhall be alive at the great day, when our Lord ſhall come to judge the world; who, as St. Paul hath told us, when the trumpet ſhall ſound, ſhall not die, but be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, as if they were the only perſons, that ſhould never die. But our Lord himſelf manifeſtly ſpeaketh of all true Believers in all the texts, that have been quoted; and, indeed, it is not very probable, that he ſhould have addreſſed himſelf to Martha in thoſe words: He, that liveth and believeth in me, ſhall never die (with this addition, Believeſt thou this?) referring to a revelation, that was not made to her, nor to any one elſe, ſo far as we know, till the myſtery of that inſtantaneous change of thoſe, that ſhall be alive at the day of judgment, was revealed to St. Paul, and by him to all Chriſtians; for that would have been to aſk her, if ſhe did not believe, what ſhe could not underſtand. He, that will attentively read over the whole 6th chapter of St. John's Goſpel, will certainly conclude, that

our Saviour muſt be ſpeaking there, as well as in this 11th chapter, of the ſpiritual life, which being begun in Faith here, is never interrupted, but continued to eternity. In the 40th verſe of that 6th chapter, our Saviour thus expreſſes himſelf: "This is the will of him that ſent me, that every one, which ſeeth the Son and believeth on him, may have everlaſting life, and I will raiſe him up at the laſt day." Theſe words cannot be limited to thoſe, that ſhall be living at the day of the general reſurrection. For they, that ſhall then be living, will not include all believers; nor can they, that are to be changed in the twinkling of an eye, be properly ſaid to be raiſed up at the laſt day, and, therefore, it is the ſpiritual life concerning which our Saviour here ſpeaks, and yet more plainly in the following words: "Verily, verily I ſay unto you, he that believeth on me, hath everlaſting life." And again, "I am the living Bread, that came down from Heaven, he, that eateth me, ſhall live by me, not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead; he, that eateth this bread, ſhall live for ever." And when his Diſciples murmured at this ſaying, he ſaid unto them: "Doth this offend you? what

what if ye ſhall ſee the Son of Man aſcend up, where he was before." "It is the ſpirit that quickeneth, the fleſh profiteth nothing: The words, that I ſpeak unto you, they are ſpirit, and they are life;" which words do plainly ſhew, that it was the ſpiritual, and not the natural life, of which he ſpoke, even as by being born again, in the third chapter of this Goſpel, by St. John, it was the ſpiritual, not the natural, birth, that is to be underſtood. But enough of this. He, therefore, that will enter into life, let him now enter. Why looks he for another opportunity? or why ſtands he at a diſtance from that ſtate, which lies within his approach on this ſide the grave? Between this temporal life, and that, which is eternal, there lies no interval, that can form any new diſpoſitions in us, Faith in Chriſt, and that delight in God, which naturally flows from it, is Heaven and everlaſting life begun, and the converſion of this faith into viſion is Heaven in the perfection of bliſs. The happineſs of Saints on Earth, and of thoſe in Heaven, differing but in degree, the tranſition from the one to the other being without intermiſſion or interval. The ſight of God is the objective happineſs of

Heaven.

Heaven. He, therefore, that by Faith ſees him, though it be but darkly, commences Heaven on Earth; and death will not obſcure, but bring the object nearer to his view; for now we ſee through a glaſs darkly, but then face to face; now we know in part, but then ſhall we know, even as we are known; then ſhall we know God, as he knows us: He will then diſcover to us all the beauty of his perfections, all the Myſteries of his providence, all the treaſures of his wiſdom, and all the riches of his goodneſs. And he, who hath any perception of that pleaſure, which ſprings up in the ſoul of man, upon the diſcovery of any ſecret power in things natural, or the attainment of any important point of human knowledge, will eaſily allow, that ſuch a knowledge of God himſelf muſt needs be a moſt delightful entertainment. But it is not ſo much the ſight and contemplation of the divine perfections, as the communication of thoſe joys, that flow from him, that makes the Saints ſo perfectly happy and bleſſed. The heavenly inhabitants are much more obliged to God for their receptions from him, as the Fountain of Life, than for the ſight and contemplation of him, as the ſubject of all perfection,

perfection, even as mankind are more obliged to the ſun for its influences than its beauty.—Thus have I not only led you to the borders of the promiſed land, but alſo made a ſhort excurſion into it, and paſſed, as ſome may think, beyond the limits of the text. But though to ſee God be ſomewhat more than never to die, which is but a negative deſcription of Heaven, yet all the happineſs implied in that expreſſion; he, who never dies, ſhall ever live to know and to enjoy. Let us now apply what hath been ſaid. And, firſt, if ſuch be the power and benefits of Faith in Chriſt, that the Believer hath in ſpirit already commenced that life, which ſhall never have an end, and hath moreover a ſure title to the reſurrection of his own mortal body to an endleſs and glorious life; then I infer, that it is every man's great duty, as well as intereſt, to examine himſelf, whether he be in the faith. As the ſecurity and happineſs is great on the one hand, ſo is the danger and miſery on the other; for he, that believeth not, is dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, yea, according to what St. John hath ſaid, he is condemned already. Now Faith is beſt known by its fruits. If our Faith hath not a

ſtrong

ſtrong influence upon our practice, it is of no value in God's eſteem. If we be not ſober, temperate, chaſte, true, juſt, and charitable; if we be not pure, meek, and humble, if we do not intend and endeavour to do our whole duty both to God and man, we are yet but reprobate concerning the Faith; Chriſt is not yet formed in us, nor our faith unreprovable in his ſight. He died for ſin, that we ſhould die to ſin, and he roſe again from the dead, that we ſhould riſe to newneſs of life. But, ſecondly, The doctrines delivered in the two laſt propoſitions may ſerve to fortify the mind againſt the fear of death. If, indeed, death did make a final end of us; if the body were to lie confuſed amongſt its kindred duſt for ever, and the ſoul, as ſome of the Heathens did imagine, were loſt in the immenſity of ſpace, or, like a vapour, diſperſed in air, immediately after its divorce; then it would not be unreaſonable to look upon the grave as being, according to the ſtyle of ſome Writers, the tomb of mournful ſilence. But, if on the contrary, the body be but laid down in the grave to paſs from all the diſhonours and debaſements thereof to a joyful reſurrection, to have its weakneſs converted

verted into ſtrength, its corruption into incorruption, its diſhonour into glory, by that mighty working of our great Redeemer, whereby he is able to ſubdue all things to himſelf: If alſo the ſoul dies not; if the life of grace be not diſcontinued by death, but, on the contrary, advanced and improved into the life of glory; we may well comfort ourſelves with theſe words: We have the word of truth engaged for a Reſurrection, and we are ſure, that our Redeemer, who is riſen again, and become the firſt fruits of them, that ſlept, is able by his almighty Power, to perform what he hath promiſed, and till we queſtion either his veracity, or his power; we ſhall not be afraid of death, as thoſe, that have no hope. It is true, indeed, death muſt needs be terrible to a wicked man, but then the fault is in himſelf. Let him truly repent of all his paſt offences, and turn to God by Faith in Chriſt, and ſtedfaſt purpoſes of obedience, and he will ſoon find death diſarmed of its ſting, and the grave, of its victory. The hope and aſſurance of a life to come and of the reſurrection of his mortal body, to a ſtate of immortality and glory, will fill his heart with joy and gratitude, and be ſuch a

ſupport and comfort to him, that he will find it eaſy to join with St. Paul, in his triumphant exultation, and ſay; O death! where is thy ſting? O grave! where is thy victory? The ſting of death is ſin, and the ſtrength of ſin is the law; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. And this will neceſſarily lead him to the ſame Apoſtle's inference, viz. to be ſtedfaſt, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, for as much as he knoweth, that his labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord. To him be glory, now and evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON IX.

SERMON IX.

Heb. vi. *ver.* 19, 20. *Which Hope we have, as an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt, and which entereth into that within the Vail, whither our Forerunner is for us entered, even Jeſus.*

IN this whole Epiſtle, and particularly in this chapter, the Apoſtle is exhorting the Hebrew converts to be ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of their faith, diligent in the performance of their duty, and patient under all the evils and ſufferings, to which the profeſſion of their faith in Chriſt might expoſe them; waiting upon God with full confidence in his gracious promiſe of making them partakers of an eternal inheritance. To give the greater force to this exhortation he ſets before them, by an apt ſimi-

litude, the great reward of perſeverance, on the one hand, and the horrid guilt and great dander of apoſtacy on the other. As the earth, which drinketh in the rain, that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs, meet for them, by whom it is dreſſed, receiveth a bleſſing from God; even ſo, he that hath embraced the Chriſtian Faith, and been made partaker of the ſanctifying influences of the Holy Ghoſt, and bringeth forth the fruits of an holy obedience is highly acceptable unto God, ſure to receive many bleſſings from him here, and many more and much greater hereafter. And, on the contrary, as that land, which beareth thorns and briars is rejected, and is nigh unto curſing, whoſe end is to be burned; even ſo, the unfruitful Chriſtian, who reſiſts the Holy Spirit, denies the Faith, and lives in wickedneſs, is in danger of eternal damnation; and, without repentance, his end is, that he alſo ſhall be conſumed in the fire of divine vengeance. But beloved, ſaith he, we are perſuaded better things of you, and things that accompany ſalvation, though we thus ſpeak. For God is not unrighteous, that he will forget your works and labour of love, which love you have ſhewed for his name's

name's ſake, in that ye have miniſtered unto the Saints and yet do miniſter. And we deſire, that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not ſlothful, but followers of them, who, through Faith and Patience, inherit the promiſes, which promiſes God hath confirmed with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for him to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolation; we, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope ſet before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt; and which entereth into that which is within the vail: Whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jeſus.

From the words thus introduced, I ſhall take occaſion, firſt, to enquire into the nature, object, grounds, and effects of this Hope, which the Apoſtle repreſents as an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt, and then conclude with the proper inferences. And,

First, of the nature of this Hope.—Hope is an habitual and rational expectation of abſent or future good. And,

And, firſt, I ſay, that Hope is an habitual expectation; for no moral virtue or Chriſtian grace is of a momentary or tranſient nature.—What doth it avail us to believe or hope to-day, and to doubt or diſbelieve to-morrow; to be one hour endeavouring to obtain the object of our hopes, and the next, ſhamefully quitting our purſuit, ever halting between two opinions, yet never acting conſiſtently with either. Putting our hands to the plough and immediately looking back; like the double-minded man, unſtable in all our ways. Such men are not fit for the Kingdom of God, neither muſt they expect to reap the joyful harveſt. Such a fluctuating hope can never endure unto the end, and yet he only that endureth unto the end, muſt expect to be ſaved. No ſhip can be in ſafety, whoſe anchor does not hold her fixed until the ſtorm is over. It is our duty, therefore, to hold faſt our confidence and the rejoicing of our hope, firm unto the end.

Secondly.—Hope is not only an habitual but alſo a rational expectation. We are, therefore, required to be always ready to give a reaſon of the hope, that is in us. An implicit faith

faith is a debaſement of our nature, as rational creatures, and a diſhonour to God and our holy religion. There is the ſame abſurdity in a groundleſs hope, as in an implicit faith, A Chriſtian hope is founded upon the promiſes of God. Theſe promiſes are conditional, being made only to the faithful and obedient. And, therefore, the hope of every good Chriſtian is built as well upon a conſciouſneſs of his own faith and obedience, as upon the immutability of God's promiſes. If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God; confidence implying both the teſtimony of our own conſciences, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity we have had our converſation in the world, and alſo a conſequent dependence upon the divine promiſes. And, without a concurrence of both theſe, this anchor will find no ſure ground, wherein to faſten.— The good Chriſtian can, with St. Paul, exult, and ſay, with joy unſpeakable and full of glory, Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, which the Lord the righteous Judge ſhall give me, at that day, and not to me only, but alſo to all thoſe, that love his appearing; but then he remembers, at the ſame time,

that

that he hath fought the good fight, finiſhed his courſe and kept the Faith. In like manner, muſt we follow this great Apoſtle's example, if we would be partakers of his hope.

THIRDLY.—This hope is the expectation of an abſent or future good, hope that is ſeen, as St. Paul ſpeaks, is not hope. For what a man ſeeth, why doth he yet hope for it? A Chriſtian hope is founded upon Faith. He, therefore, walks by Faith and not by ſight. He puts not his truſt in princes, nor in any child of man, becauſe he knows there is no ſure help in them; that when the breath of man goeth forth, he dies, and all his thoughts periſh; and with them all the vain hopes of all thoſe that have put their truſt in them. He ſaith not to gold, thou art my hope, nor to fine gold, thou art my confidence. He knows that riches often make themſelves wings and fly away; and that death is haſtening on the wings of time, and will ſoon make an eternal ſeparation between the worldling and his beloved Mammon. He therefore looks not at the things, which are ſeen, which are temporal, but at the things, which are not ſeen, becauſe they are eternal.

eternal. Supported by the hope of the recompenſe of reward, he endures as ſeeing him that is inviſible; and conſidering himſelf as a ſojourner here on earth, where he hath no continuing city, he ſeeks one to come, which hath foundations, whoſe maker and builder is God. Having received and embraced the promiſes of remiſſion of ſin, of reconciliation with God, and of eternal happineſs in the viſion of God; he freely offers up every beloved luſt, every darling temporal object, his right hand, or his right eye, or his only ſon, if they be required of him. He chooſeth rather to ſuffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleaſures of ſin for a ſeaſon; he eſteems the reproach of Chriſt greater riches than the treaſures of Egypt: For he hath reſpect unto the recompenſe of an eternal reward. Thus doth the hope of a Chriſtian enter into that holy place, that lieth within the vail, fixing its eyes upon the glorious proſpect of an eternal inheritance, a crown of glory, that fadeth not away; not the leſs certain becauſe at preſent inviſible to ſenſe, and inacceſſible to mortal eyes. Such then is the nature and ſuch are the objects of the Chriſtian's hope, the grounds of which are

not leſs certain than thoſe objects are great and glorious. Otherwiſe the Apoſtle would never have deſcribed this hope, as being an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt. Theſe grounds are the promiſe and the oath of God, as the context plainly ſhews. For God, willing more abundantly to ſhew unto the heirs of promiſe the ſtability of his counſel, confirmed it by an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impoſſible for God to lie, we might have ſtrong conſolation, we who have fled for refuge from the fear of death, and of the penal conſequences of ſin, to lay hold upon the hope of eternal life, which hope we have as an anchor of the ſoul both ſure and ſtedfaſt, which God, who cannot lie hath promiſed, and which entereth into that holy place within the vail, whither our Forerunner, the bleſſed Jeſus, is for us entered. In theſe laſt words St. Paul hath ſuggeſted to us, as St. Peter alſo hath done, Epiſtle i. ver. 1, 3, 4, 5, another ſtrong foundation of our Chriſtian hope. Bleſſed be God and the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again to a lively hope by the reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible

incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reſerved in heaven for thoſe, that are kept by the power of God unto ſalvation, ready to be revealed in the laſt time. In theſe paſſages of holy Scripture and others that might be quoted, the grounds of our Chriſtian hope, viz. the promiſe and oath of God himſelf, confirmed by the reſurrection of our Redeemer from the dead, and his glorious aſcenſion into heaven, are plainly pointed out. And what ſtronger foundation for our hope can we deſire, than the promiſe of God himſelf, confirmed by an oath? If we receive the witneſs of men, the witneſs of God is greater; greater ſure, when it is further confirmned by the actual reſurrection of Jeſus Chriſt, our Redeemer, from the dead; and alſo by his moſt glorious aſcenſion into Heaven, into which, He, as our Forerunner, is for us entered. Thus the hope of eternal ſalvation, upon the conditions of Faith and Obedience, ſtands upon the ſureſt grounds, that Heaven itſelf can give; yet all theſe hopes and theſe foundations of them, the Deiſt makes no other account of, than of the dreams of men but half awake. As if we Chriſtians, were the only credulous mortals, that could

find truth and evidence, where none are to be found. Well, let it be ſuppoſed that Chriſtians are of a more credulous diſpoſition than ſome other men. Yet poſſibly, in this caſe, it may be better to be too forward, than too ſlow of heart to believe; ever credulous than unbelieving. For if God never made any revelation of his will to mankind, then there is no promiſe of eternal life to be found elſewhere; and if no promiſe, no hope; and ſo theſe men of ſuperior penetration will again reduce us to the wretched ſtate of the gentile world before the coming of Chriſt; and then how ſoon ſhould we be even as they, dead in treſpaſſes and ſins, aliens from the common-wealth of Iſrael, ſtrangers to the covenant of promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the world. For though natural reaſon might have informed us, that puniſhment is due to ſin, yet remiſſion of ſin is the effect of God's free grace; and eternal life is the free gift of God, in no conſequence of reaſon due, as a claim of right, even to innocent and ſinleſs creatures, much leſs to thoſe, that have, as all men indeed have, ſinned, though they ſhould afterwards repent. Injuries done to men are not repaired by bare repentance,

tance, neither will a ſubſequent obedience, expiate the guilt of former diſobedience. And therefore our aſſurance of the pardon of our ſins, and conſequently the hope of eternal life, both as to the certainty, duration and greatneſs of the happineſs implied in that expreſſion, is to us in our preſent circumſtances, wholly founded upon the promiſe of God in Chriſt Jeſus, revealed in the holy Scriptures. And why, I pray, ſhould we not believe theſe Scriptures? Why ſhould we not believe them to be given by inſpiration of God? Was there not a manifeſt neceſſity for a revelation from God? Are evident demonſtrations of divine power in atteſtation to them no proof, that God was with the Revealers? Is the excellency of the doctrines therein contained, manifeſtly tending to the advancement of the glory of God, and to the private and public, the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind no evidence of their divine original? Is the wonderful completion of the Prophecies contained in them no demonſtration of the concurrence of an omniſcient eye?

Is the blood of Apoſtles and Martyrs no teſtimony to the Goſpel of Chriſt? And is it impoſſible

poſſible or improbable, that God ſhould have made known his will to wretched man, loſt and bewildered in a labyrinth of error, ſin, and miſery? God forbid! The great Roman Orator, though aſſiſted by no other light than that of reaſon, was of another opinion. And ſurely thoſe incredulous people do believe many doctrines on weaker evidence than this. Why then ſhould they with ſo much zeal endeavour to undermine the only foundation of our hopes? For other foundation can no man lay than that, which is laid, that is, Chriſt Jeſus. If in this life only, we had hope we were of all creatures the moſt miſerable. Spare then your fruitleſs pains, ye enlightened reaſoners of the preſent age; your pretended compaſſion would be cruel, though all our hopes were but deluſion. But this is a moſt irrational ſuppoſition; for the hope of a Chriſtian is founded on the word, the promiſe, and the oath of God; confirmed by the glorious reſurrection and aſcenſion of our Redeemer. It is an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt.

But theſe modern infidels are very apt to boaſt of their morality, which, they doubt not, will

will entitle them to the favour of God both here and hereafter. But how do they know, that there is a future ſtate of rewards and puniſhments? Was not life and immortality brought to light by the goſpel? And will they believe one part of the goſpel revealing a truth, they never could have known without it, and reject all the reſt? Or will they rather reject the whole, and leave their own moral ſyſtems without ſanction or ſupport? But what their boaſted morality would have been without a light borrowed either from the law, or the the goſpel? Look into the lives of the generality of the Heathen world and ſee. And would not theſe very unbelievers without this borrowed light have wrought (if indeed they do not ſtill work the will of the Gentiles? Would they not have walked in ſome or all their abominations, i. e in laſciviouſneſs, luſts, exceſs of wine, revelings, banquetings, and probably, the moſt abominable Idolatries? Every competent judge of ſuch matters, it may reaſonably be preſumed, will be ready to anſwer in the affirmative.

HAVING thus conſidered the nature, object, and grounds, we proceed in the laſt place to

conſider

conſider the effects of this our Chriſtian hope, which are not leſs excellent, than theſe grounds are certain. Theſe are too many to be particularly enumerated, I ſhall, therefore, reduce them to two general heads, conſidering this hope firſt as it purifies, and then as it fortifies the Soul. And, firſt, I ſay, that this hope will purify the ſoul. As faith worketh by love, ſo hope by deſire: And, as faith without works is dead, ſo hope without endeavour, is dead alſo. Faith being the evidence of things not ſeen, preſents the future beatitude to the mind, and raiſes love and deſire; then ſuggeſts the poſſibility and certainty of its being attainable, and thence ariſes hope. And both theſe, with united force, naturally excite the moſt ſtrenuous endeavours. It is thus that faith and hope become the moſt lively ſprings of action, and produce an uniform obedience. For what man is there, who having found a treaſure hid in a field, doth not, for joy thereof, go and ſell all that he hath, and purchaſe that field? Thus doth our Chriſtian hope effectually incline us, to exert all our powers in the uſe of thoſe means, by which eternal happineſs, the pearl of great price, is to be obtained. And, foraſ-

much

much as every Chriſtian knows right well, that this happineſs conſiſts in the viſion of God, the ſupreme good, which is promiſed only to the pure in heart, and that without holineſs no man can ſee the Lord; therefore, having this hope in him of ſeeing him as he is, he purifies himſelf as he is pure, and endeavours to be perfect, as his Father which is in Heaven is perfect.

You will not however ſo far miſtake the meaning of theſe texts, as to ſuppoſe that he, who hath the ſtrongeſt faith and hope will, or can, by his own natural powers, make himſelf pure and perfect, and much leſs as pure and perfect as God himſelf. Καθὼς is an adverb of likeneſs, not of equality. Our ſufficiency is of God; without his preventing and aſſiſting grace we can do nothing. Faith and hope are divine gifts and graces; and it is by theſe, that God purifies our hearts; by theſe, I ſay, co-operating with the divine influence, as ſubordinate means and motives, in the production of a ſincere obedience of a Godlike, not equal holineſs, to which we never can attain. For God chargeth even his Angels with folly. Yea, the very

Heavens are not clean in his ſight. What then is man that he ſhould be clean, or he that is born of a woman, that he ſhould be righteous, that is, abſolutely or perfectly ſuch? But under theſe reſtrictions we may truly ſay, and I conceive it has been ſufficiently proved, that hope will purify. And it is no leſs certain, that it will alſo fortify the mind. The great check to the profeſſion of the Chriſtian faith in the times of its firſt promulgation, was the apprehenſion of reproach and perſecution. Our bleſſed Saviour did not ſcruple to inform his Diſciples, that theſe would be the certain conſequences of their faith in him; neither did the Apoſtles conceal them from thoſe, to whom they preached the goſpel. Now although the conditions of our entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, are not ſo diſcouraging as heretofore; yet he that is born after the fleſh will always perſecute him that is born after the Spirit; and every good Chriſtian muſt deny himſelf, take up his Croſs, and follow Chriſt. He muſt wreſtle not only againſt fleſh and blood, but againſt principalities, againſt powers, againſt the rulers of the darkneſs of this world. And what is there in this world, beſides this hope, to balance the

force

force of ſuch diſcouragements? But let this grace be once infuſed into the ſoul, and you will ſoon ſee the glorious effects of it. Then will not the Chriſtian be aſhamed of the Goſpel of Chriſt; becauſe he knows it to be the power of God unto ſalvation. Then will he take pleaſure in reproaches, in neceſſities, in diſtreſſes, in perſecutions for Chriſt's ſake. Yea, he will rejoice, that he is counted worthy to ſuffer ſhame for his name. Thus doth a true Chriſtian hope fortify the mind.

THIS is the reaſon that the true Chriſtian faints not; but though his outward man periſh, yet his inward man is renewed day by day. He reckons, that the ſufferings of this preſent time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that ſhall be revealed; that the light affliction, which is but for a moment, ſhall work out for him a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Theſe are the reaſons, that true Believers never mourn for the loſs of their deareſt relations, as do thoſe that have no hope. Believing that their Redeemer died and roſe again; that God will bring again from the dead thoſe, that ſleep in him, and that they

ſhall be ever with him, they comfort themſelves and each other with theſe words: Thus when Jacob, borne down with age and ſorrow, had heard that his Son Joſeph was yet alive, his ſpirits revived; and ſurely we may well comfort ourſelves to think, that our friends, though dead to us, are yet alive with God. And, that if we die to ſin and live unto righteouſneſs, we ſhall one day meet again never to be divorced. Yea, this hope will ſupport the good Chriſtian under the ſtrongeſt apprehenſions of his own approaching diſſolution. We ſee this exemplified in the Apoſtle himſelf, "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand." A gloomy proſpect might an Unbeliever ſay! But the Apoſtle ſpeaks of it without any painful emotion, and paſſes immediately to the conſciouſneſs of his fidelity, and the proſpect of a crown of Righteouſneſs; I have fought a good fight, finiſhed my courſe, and kept the Faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of Righteouſneſs. And elſewhere, to me, To live is Chriſt, to die, is gain. And again, I am in a ſtrait between two, having a deſire to depart and to be with Chriſt, which is far better, nevertheleſs to abide in the

fleſh

fleſh is more needful for you. Nothing, you ſee, could check his deſire of departing and being with Chriſt, but his charity to his beloved converts. Such were the glorious effects of his earneſt expectation and his hope. And ſuch likewiſe, may be both our hope and the effects of it, if we be not wanting to ourſelves. For the crown of Righteouſneſs is promiſed to all thoſe that love the appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt. Thus, when we droop under any affliction, hope gives us new ſpirits, and makes us, as it were, alive again. But what is this mortal life more than merely breathing, without this hope? The language of the natural man is, Whilſt there is life there is hope; but the good Chriſtian can rejoice in hope expiring, and in death. For, though life and breath muſt fail, this hope fails not, it entereth within and looketh beyond the vail; it ſleeps not, but is changed into an immediate enjoyment of the beloved object, and flows into the beatific viſion; as rivers into the ſea, or time into eternity.

Thus doth a well-grounded expectation of future bliſs, afford more ſolid comfort than, the

the actual enjoyment of all earthly bleſſings; and from this fountain do all thoſe divine comforts flow, that in the multitude of the ſorrows we have in our hearts effectually refreſh our ſouls. For this hope is full of immortality, it is the very life of this life mortal.

FROM what has been ſaid, we may eaſily diſcover the true deſign of thoſe, who labour to undermine the credit and authority of the Holy Scriptures, which is no other than the utter extirpation of our Holy Religion, and the depriving us of our hope of better life in reverſion, without which our preſent exiſtence is ſcarcely worth a rational deſire. Hence, ſecondly, we are ſupplied with an eaſy anſwer to the vain pretenſions of ſome, who affirm that we cannot be true Chriſtians, nor in the number of the regenerate without a confident and abſolute aſſurance of our own ſalvation. For though the hope of a Chriſtian be as an anchor of the ſoul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt; yet it muſt be ſomewhat ſhort of an abſolute aſſurance.—We deſire, ſaith St. Paul, that every one of you do ſhew the ſame diligence to the full aſſurance of hope unto the end. After all our diligence

diligence, therefore, our aſſurance is but the aſſurances of hope, to the fullneſs whereof, the ſame diligence is required to the very end of life. Perfect love and perfect hope caſt out all doubt and fear. But in whom are this perfect love and perfect hope to be found? Or in whom is that purity, which is the natural effect of this hope, ſo perfect, as to admit of an abſolute aſſurance? It is true, the promiſes of God are Yea, and Amen, i. e. moſt ſure and certain.—When, therefore, we look at theſe promiſes, if we endeavour to purify ourſelves, as he is pure; we have a good hope through grace. But when we look with an impartial eye at our own performances, ſurely our hope may be very comfortable to us, without expelling that humility and poverty of ſpirit, to which the Kingdom of Heaven is promiſed. Spiritual pride muſt, doubtleſs, have ſtrangely blinded the underſtanding of that man, who could think it a diminution of his merit, or a diſhonour to his hope, to ſay with his laſt breath, Lord be merciful to me a ſinner! The completion of our hopes depends upon our perſeverance to the end. And where is the man that can have an abſolute or confident aſſurance, that he ſhall be

proof

proof againſt all future temptations, and ſhall not fall from his own ſtedfaſtneſs? Or why did the Apoſtle repeat thoſe cautions: "Thou ſtandeſt by Faith, be not high minded but fear: Let him that thinketh he ſtandeth take heed leaſt he fall." Let us therefore endeavour ſo to preſerve a lively hope in God's mercy through Chriſt, as not however to let go either our vigilance or humility. The enemy of mankind hath found it an eaſier matter to deſtroy a proud Saint, than an humble ſinner.—Spiritual pride and preſumption are as inconſiſtent with a true Chriſtian hope, as deſpair. Whilſt we avoid the one extreme, let us be careful that we do not incautiouſly run into the other. Hence, laſtly, it will alſo follow, that the hope of eternal life is no hope at all to ſuch, as live in impurity and wickedneſs, under the Goſpel diſpenſation. To hope is the privilege of ſuch only, whoſe lives and manners are effectually reformed; for the hope of the Hypocrite ſhall periſh.

And now foraſmuch as every good gift is from above, let us devoutly pray that God would give unto us the increaſe of Faith, Hope,

and

and Charity; and that in order to obtain what he hath promiſed, we may ever love that which he hath commanded, and our hearts ever ſurely there be fixed, where, and where only, true joys are to be found, through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, as is moſt due, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for ever.—*Amen.*

SERMON X.

Preached at the Funeral of JAMES CROSBY, *Esq. on Monday November* 3, 1755, *at St. Peter's Church, in* LIVERPOOL.

Matt. XXV. *Ver.* 21. *Well done good and faithful Servant, thou haſt been faithful in a few Things, I will make thee Ruler over many Things; enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.*

IN this Chapter, we find our Saviour (according to his uſual cuſtom) inculcating his excellent doctrines and precepts in Parables.— The deſign of all parables is inſtruction. The darkneſs or obſcurity, that is in them, naturally excites the curioſity of the hearer to enquire the more cloſely into their true meaning; which,

which, when diſcovered, makes the deeper impreſſion upon the mind, and is the longer retained. Our Saviour hath indeed aſſigned a different reaſon for his uſe of them in anſwer to his Diſciples queſtion; why ſpeakeſt thou to them in parables? I ſpeak to them in parables, ſaith he, becauſe they ſeeing, ſee not, and hearing, hear not, neither do they underſtand.—And in them is fulfilled that prophecy of Iſaiah, which ſaith, by hearing ye ſhall hear and not underſtand; and ſeeing ye ſhall ſee, and not perceive. For this people's heart is waxed groſs, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they cloſed, leſt at any time they ſhould ſee with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and ſhould underſtand with their heart, and ſhould be converted, and I ſhould heal them. They had cloſed their own eyes, that they might not be converted and healed by him. And thus thoſe very parables, which were the Saviour of life unto life to the well-diſpoſed, were the Saviour of death unto death to the obſtinate and unbelieving Jews; according to that moſt juſt determination; to him that hath, ſhall be given, but whoſoever hath not, from him ſhall be taken away, even

that he hath; that is, he, who uſeth the grace he hath, ſhall have more given him, but he, who uſeth it not, in which caſe he might as well not have it, ſhall not only be denied more, but be deprived of what he hath. To the well-diſpoſed, therefore, theſe parables of our Lord are moſt inſtructive, and with reſpect to them is that prophecy concerning the Meſſiah fulfilled: I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things, which have been kept ſecret from the beginning of the world, i. e. I will declare thoſe myſterious truths, which, though not before, are now, though but in parables, revealed by me. This being premiſed, I proceed now to obſerve, that a parable is a ſenſible repreſentation of things moral, divine and ſpiritual; or a deſcription of things viſible and temporal, that bear ſome analogy to things ſpiritual and eternal; from which deſcription, transferred to its proper ſubject, the nature of the latter may be rightly deduced. It will, therefore, be neceſſary, that we firſt lay down an abſtract of the parable, that we may the more clearly deduce the doctrinal propoſitions implied in the text, and particularly thoſe which I intend to be the ſubject of the following diſcourſe.

THE

The ſubſtance of the parable is this: The Kingdom of Heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, calling his own ſervants together, and delivering unto them his goods; to one, five talents; to another, two; and to another, one; to every man according to his reſpective abilities, with this charge, that they ſhould occupy them, till his return. After his departure, he, that had received five talents, went and traded with them, and gained five more; and he that had received two, gained likewiſe two; but he that had received one, went and hid his Lord's talent in the earth. After a long time the Lord of thoſe ſervants returning and calling them to account, he, that had received five talents, came and brought the five talents, he had received, and as many more; and ſo likewiſe did he, that had received two: To each of theſe their Lord anſwered, ſaying, Well done good and faithful ſervant, thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will make thee Ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. But he, that had received one, came and ſaid, Lord, I knew thee, that thou art an auſtere Maſter, reaping where thou haſt not ſown, and gathering where thou haſt not ſtrewed, and

I was

I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: Lo! there thou haſt, that is thine. His Lord anſwered; Thou wicked and ſloth-ful ſervant, thou knoweſt, that I reap, where I ſowed not; and gather, where I have not ſtrewed, thou oughteſt therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then, at my coming, I ſhould have received my own with uſury: Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to him, that hath ten talents; for unto every one that hath, that is, as we may conclude from what went before, that improves and applies his talents to their proper uſe, ſhall be given, and he ſhall have abundance; but from him, that doth not ſo improve and uſe them, ſhall be taken away even that, which he hath. Caſt ye, therefore, the unprofitable ſervant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. This is the parable, which, when transferred to its proper ſubject, may be thus explained: The man, that travelled into a far country, who is alſo ſpoken of as a Nobleman, Lord or King, is the ever bleſſed Son of God, to whom the Father hath given to be Lord over all things; who hath now for a long time left the earth, and is

gone

gone to the boſom of his Father. The ſervants of this Lord are all mankind, but eſpecially thoſe, that have profeſſed themſelves to be his Diſciples. Theſe are called his own ſervants, becauſe they are his by right of Creation, for God created all things by Jeſus Chriſt; of preſervation, becauſe he upholdeth all things by the word of his power; and alſo of redemption, becauſe he hath bought us with no leſs a price than that of his own moſt precious blood. The talents delivered to theſe, his ſervants, are all the various means of doing good, by which we are enabled to advance the honour of God, or the welfare of mankind. Theſe are called his goods, becauſe we derive them from his bounty, and are bound to improve and employ them to his honour, and not only to our own, but alſo to the benefit of our brethren, that are in the world; which is, indeed, the only means by which we can advance the glory of God, even by letting our light ſo ſhine before men, that they may ſee our good works, and glorify our Father, which is in Heaven. Occupy till I come is the command, that obliges us to this improvement and application of our talents. And a moſt juſt obligation this muſt be, ſince

he,

he, whoſe creatures we are, from whom we derive all our powers and faculties, all the opportunities and means of doing good; he who hath redeemed us from the dominion of death and ſin; and purchaſed us with his own blood; he, that not only gives, but continues to us life and breath, and every good thing we enjoy, may moſt juſtly demand our obedience to ſuch equitable laws, as only require us to do good to our fellow creatures according to the ability, which he giveth. He, that doth not obey theſe juſt commands, defeats the deſign of God in giving his goods to him. The long time, that this Lord is ſuppoſed to be abſent, with reſpect to all mankind, is that interval of time, that lies between our Saviour's leaving the world, and his return to judgment at the laſt day: But with reſpect to particular perſons, it commences with their firſt capacity of ſerving God, and ends with their being ſummoned hence to receive the reward of their doings, or at leaſt the firſt fruits of that happineſs or puniſhment, they may have deſerved. For that God will certainly judge the world, that there ſhall be a day of reckoning and retribution; yea, that the ſouls of the faithful are in a

ſtate

ſtate of happineſs, and that the wicked do receive a ſuitable recompence immediately after their departure hence, is the dictate of the good man's hopes, and the wicked man's fears from the apprehenſion of which, it ſeems, the unprofitable ſervant could not free himſelf after, any more than before he had hid his Lord's talent in the earth. There is in man a certain longing after immortality, which even unaſſiſted reaſon encourages. Surely God did not imprint this appetite upon the ſoul of man on purpoſe to deceive and tantalize him. Why was the thought of annihilation made ſo very ſhocking to the ſoul of every rational man, if there be no means of eſcaping it? Why hath the ſoul ſuch an inſatiable thirſt after knowledge if it is to be cut ſhort in the beginning of its enquiries? Bare unaſſiſted reaſon therefore might aſſure us, that the ſoul of man muſt ſurvive the grave in a ſtate of happineſs or miſery: The very nature of the ſoul itſelf ſeeming to be incapable of a ſtate of indifference without a ſuppoſition of its being reduced to a ſtate of inſenſibility. The juſtice of God, the temporal impunity of many wicked men, and the great afflictions which ſome times the moſt faithful

ſervants of God endure in this world, call loudly for a day of adequate and eternal retribution. But the word of God hath removed all our doubts. For this very end it was that he raiſed up Chriſt from the dead, that he might give aſſurance unto all men, that there ſhall be a reſurrection both of the juſt and unjuſt; that he will judge the world in righteouſneſs; and that when the pious ſoul is abſent from the body, it is preſent with the Lord. The joy of his Lord, into which the good and faithful ſervant is to enter, is a deſcription of that ineffable felicity, which God hath prepared for all that truly love and ſerve him; and that outer darkneſs, into which the unprofitable ſervant ſhall be caſt, is the emblem of Hell, the manſion of inconceivable pain and horror. By the many things, over which God will make his good and faithful ſervants rulers, we are to underſtand the great honour and happineſs, that God will confer upon them; and as they are put in oppoſition to the few things, in which they have been faithful, they intimate to us the vaſt diſproportion, betwixt our work and our wages, betwixt our labour and our reward; that being of little importance in itſelf, this exceeding great beyond

our

our preſent conception. *(In tenui labor, at non tenuis Gloria.)* The ſame approbation of the due improvement and right uſe of two, as of five talents, ſhews that God equally approves equal fidelity in proportionable abilities; and that he deſpiſes not the faithful diſcharge of the duties of the meaneſt capacity. Thus you ſee, that this parable is full of doctrines, that do greatly deſerve not only our preſent thoughts, but frequent recollection: Such as God's ſovereign dominion over us, which calls not only for an active, but paſſive obedience alſo from us. The deſign of God in giving talents to us, which we are to improve and to uſe, not as proprietors, but ſtewards, to his honour and the benefit of our brethren. The obligation that lies upon us to improve and uſe them in compliance with his moſt wiſe and gracious deſign. The certainty of a future ſtate, wherein we ſhall be rewarded or puniſhed according to our doings; and of a judgment to come, when God will exact from us a ſtrict account of our preſent behaviour in the diſcharge of our reſpective duties. The goodneſs of God in accepting the duties of the loweſt conſideration, where true fidelity is found. For he will judge

us, not ſo much according to the number and greatneſs of our talents, as to our fidelity and uſe of them, be they great or ſmall, many or few; and, laſtly, the exceeding greatneſs of the reward of the good and faithful, and of the puniſhment of the ſlothful, wicked and unprofitable ſervant. All theſe are proper ſubjects of our meditation at all times. But I ſhall confine myſelf to the conſideration of thoſe particulars, which are moſt plainly ſuggeſted in the words of the text itſelf. And the firſt thing, that deſerves our attention, is the nature of that fidelity, which muſt be found in that ſervant, whom our great Lord and Maſter will approve and reward. Well done good and faithful ſervant. The next thing will be the conſideration both of the abſolute and comparative greatneſs of that reward. Thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. Our firſt enquiry is, wherein this Chriſtian fidelity, which our Lord will approve and reward, doth conſiſt. It is required in a ſteward, that he be found faithful; and if in a ſteward, then in a ſervant alſo, for every ſteward is a ſervant, and every ſervant is a ſteward in proportion

proportion to the truſt repoſed in him. In the chapter immediately preceding, our Saviour calls that perſon, whom his Lord had made ruler over his houſehold, to give them their meat in due ſeaſon, a ſervant. Bleſſed is that ſervant, ſaith he, whom his Lord, when he cometh ſhall find ſo doing. From which words we learn, firſt, that the idle ſervant, who neither improves nor uſeth his talent to any good purpoſe, muſt neceſſarily be unfaithful. The great man, who doth not protect the weak and defenceleſs; the rich man, that doth not relieve the poor with his bounty and charity; the wiſe man, that doth not aſſiſt the community with his counſels; and the poor man, that doth not contribute to the public welfare by his labour and induſtry, are real nuiſances in a common wealth, and a great diſhonour to the religion they profeſs. The candle is not to be put under a buſhel. God never intended riches to be laid up for ruſt and moth to corrupt, or be buried in the earth, as they were by the unprofitable, the ſlothful and wicked ſervant. It is not ſufficient, that a man doeth no ill with his learning, wealth, power or authority; he muſt do good with them. Otherwiſe he will be unprofitable to his fellow ſervants,

and

and the damage ſuſtained by them through his negligence will be reſented by his Lord, as if himſelf were the ſufferer. In as much as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe my brethren; ye did it not to me. I need not repeat the dreadful ſentence, that immediately follows. It would have little availed the unprofitable ſervant to have ſaid in anſwer to this charge; Lord, I did not unjuſtly detain or take away any good thing from theſe thy brethren; I did not caſt them into priſon; I was not the occaſion of any evils or injuries to them; nor did I think, they were ſo dear to thee. Not to do good is to be unfaithful. Idleneſs corrupts both the man and his talents; and therefore a ſlothful will always be accounted a wicked ſervant. If ſuch as theſe be unfaithful, how much more they that laviſhly conſume their talents in exceſs, lewdneſs, and vanity; the intemperate, that abuſe themſelves with their wealth and abundance; the covetous and oppreſſive, that not only deny others the benefit of any part of it, but make it, as they do alſo their other talents, the inſtruments of injuſtice and cruelty? If the former ſort be unfaithful, what ſhall we ſay of them, that make uſe of their

ſuperior

ſuperior learning, ſkill, or knowledge, only to circumvent and deceive their neighbour, or, which is worſe, to lead him into ſin and error. If the former uſe not their talents to good purpoſe, theſe abuſe them to the very worſt that can be. Thoſe defeat, but theſe pervert the deſigns of providence in making them ſtewards of his manifold gifts. You may read their ſentence in the very words of our Lord himſelf. But if that evil ſervant ſhall ſay in his heart, my Lord delayeth his coming, and ſhall begin to ſmite his fellow ſervants, and to eat and drink with the drunken, the Lord of that ſervant ſhall come in a day, when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and ſhall cut him aſunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of teeth. Thus far negatively. We may now the more eaſily deduce the true poſitive notion of that fidelity, which our bleſſed Saviour hath ſo ſtrictly enjoined, and ſo powerfully recommended. And the firſt thing implied therein, is a diligent improvement of our ſeveral talents after the example of the faithful ſervants deſcribed in this parable. The difference in the proportion of the gain, that the faithful

ſervants

ſervants had made by trading, as the parable is related by St. Luke, is deſigned to teach us, that we are obliged to improve our ſeveral talents to as great an increaſe, as we can. The Chriſtian courſe of life is progreſſive: It is with him, as with one that rows againſt the ſtream; he goes backwards upon the leaſt remiſſion of his labour. In the road of virtue not to go forward is to go backward. There is no ſtanding ſtill; you muſt advance, or you will retreat. If the good principle ſlumbers, the vicious one will ſoon be awake: The one begins to act, as ſoon as the other ceaſes. That man's knowledge will ſoon be diminiſhed, who does not uſe the proper means of improving it. His ſtrength will decay, who does not exerciſe it, and his graces will grow languid, who does not revive them by congenial actions. Inward habits will naturally ſhew themſelves in outward acts; and outward acts will ſtrengthen inward habits. He that would be rich in knowledge, virtue, and grace, muſt be diligent in the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, and in the practice of all moral, ſocial, and religious duties; and, therefore, we are exhorted to grow in grace, not to be weary in well doing, but to

perſevere

perſevere unto the end; being aſſured, that in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not. But to what end is all this diligence in improving our talents required? Is it only, that we ourſelves may have great knowledge, wealth, or power? No; the end of all our own acquiſitions, and of all the gifts of God to us, is uſe.—We are not only to be diligent in improving, but alſo in employing our talents, not only to our own, but alſo to our neighbour's benefit, and to the glory of God, our Sovereign benefactor, who hath diſtinctly pointed out the particular inſtances of our duty. The faithful and wiſe ſervant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his houſehold is to give them their meat in due ſeaſon: every thing that is needful to the body or the ſoul; he is to inform the ignorant, to comfort the afflicted, to give bread to the hungry, and drink to the thirſty, to entertain the ſtranger, to viſit the ſick and impriſoned, to relieve the oppreſſed, to plead the cauſe of the poor and needy, to be a father to the fatherleſs, and a huſband to the widow. The parent is not only to provide for the temporal well-being of his children, but alſo to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

The miniſter of the Goſpel muſt feed the flock, comfort the feeble minded, confirm the wavering, bring back thoſe, that are gone aſtray, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all patience, in meekneſs inſtructing thoſe, that oppoſe themſelves; if God, peradventure, will give them repentance to the acknowledgment of the truth. He muſt be an example to believers in word, in converſation, in charity, in ſpirit, in faith, and in purity. The magiſtrate muſt not bear the ſword in vain, he muſt be a terror to evil works, he muſt uſe his beſt endeavours, that all under his authority may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all Godlineſs and honeſty; he muſt endeavour to promote the honour of God, whoſe deputy he is, by the puniſhment of wickedneſs and vice, and the maintenance of his true religion, and virtue. They, that are deficient in any of theſe their reſpective duties, will be partakers of other men's ſins, and muſt expect to ſhare in the ſame puniſhment. After this manner are all our temporal and ſpiritual gifts to be with great diligence employed to the glory of God, and good of man. We may covet earneſtly the beſt gifts, but muſt be careful not to forget the more excellent way, that of charity, by which

the

the apoſtle means, firſt the principle, a ſincere love of God and man; and, ſecondly, the natural effects of that principle, ſincere endeavours, to promote the glory of God and the welfare of our fellow-creatures. Perſeverance is the laſt conſtituent of this true Chriſtian fidelity. We are obliged to continue improving and employing our talents, with unwearied zeal, to the advancement of the glory of God, our own, and our neighbour's welfare, until our Lord ſhall come with our diſcharge. It will little avail us to have been for ſome time faithful in giving his ſervants their meat in due ſeaſon, if our Lord, when he cometh, doth not find us ſo doing. A little neglect of the ſteward ſoon runs the houſehold into great exigences and diſorder: Such is his duty, that it cannot be intermitted. You would not think that ſervant worthy of further truſt or employment, nor of the reward you had covenanted to give him for his faithful ſervice, whoſe laſt conduct only ſhould be contrary to his duty, and cancel his former merit. Perſeverance is the crown of all our graces. He that ceaſeth to do the good, he hath done, will be ſuppoſed to have repented of his former choice, as if he had not the ſame

reaſons for his obedience, as heretofore, but now began to diſown the authority of his Lord, to diſtruſt his promiſes, and to deſpiſe his threatenings. He will be thought to be weary of well-doing, as if he deſpaired of reaping in due ſeaſon. When the righteous man turneth away from his righteouſneſs, and committeth iniquity; all his righteouſneſs, that he hath done, ſhall not be mentioned, but in his treſpaſs, that he hath treſpaſſed, and in his ſin, that he hath ſinned, in them ſhall he die. He that runneth not to the end of the race, can never win the prize. Then only may the good man ſay with confidence, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſs, when his courſe is nearly finiſhed. For he only, that endures to the end, ſhall be ſaved. And, therefore, we muſt be faithful unto death, if we expect, that God ſhould give us the crown of life. And this naturally leads us to a conſideration of the reward of that fidelity, which we have been deſcribing. To him whoſe pound hath gained ten pounds, his Lord will ſay, according to St. Luke's account of a ſimilar parable: Be thou ruler over ten cities, and to him, whoſe pound hath gained five pounds, be thou

thou ruler over five cities. But, according to the text, he will ſay, Thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things. In the former expreſſion, a definite number is put for an indefinite, ſo that there is no material difference between them. From both expreſſions we learn, that as a temporal Lord uſually advances his faithful ſervants to higher degrees of wealth and honour, ſo will the Lord of Heaven and Earth advance ſuch of his ſervants, as have been moſt faithful here, to higher degrees of glory and happineſs hereafter. For them, that honour him, he will honour. And who can ſay, what great things ſhall be done for him, whom God will delight to honour? It is upon good grounds believed, that there will be a ſubordination, as in the preſent, ſo in the future ſtate. Verily, I ſay unto you, ſaith our Lord, to his Apoſtles, when the Son of man ſhall ſit upon the throne of his glory, then ſhall ye alſo ſit upon twelve thrones, judging the Twelve Tribes of Iſrael. And, therefore, they that are as ſervants here, may be as Lords there. There are other texts of Scripture that may ſerve to raiſe our expectations yet higher, for we are aſſured, that God

will

will make the faithful ſervant ruler over all that he hath, even over all his goods; that he, that overcometh, ſhall inherit all things; and that the righteous ſhall then receive the Kingdom prepared for them from the beginning of the world; yea, that God himſelf will be their exceeding great reward. Something vaſtly great muſt be implied in ſuch expreſſions as theſe; There is nothing they can deſire, that ſhall not be given them; they will enjoy him the ſupreme, and in him every other good. God will ſtamp upon them an image of his own ſovereignty. They ſhall reign with Chriſt to all eternity. There is one expreſſion yet, which indeed goes beyond all theſe, and it is found in the text in thoſe words, Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord. In the literal ſenſe they are aſtoniſhing, and raiſe our hopes to their higheſt pitch. The joy of thy Lord muſt imply an happineſs like to that, which is Divine; which God hath eternally and eſſentially in and from himſelf; and, therefore, well might St. Paul ſay, that eye hath not ſeen, nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived the good things, that God hath prepared for them, that love him.— Raiſe then your notions of happineſs, as high as poſſibly

poſſibly you can. You will ſtill be as far from forming a juſt idea of the happineſs of the faithful ſervant in a future ſtate, as the idea of a bubble is from that of the univerſe, or that of a drop from the waters of the great ocean, that of a ſhadow from ſubſtance, or finite from infinite. I ſhall not, therefore, vainly attempt a deſcription of that honour and happineſs, which the tongues of men and angels cannot deſcribe, nor any man, till the veil of mortality is removed, conceive. And is not this ſufficient to raiſe our adoration and gratitude to the Pſalmiſt's elevation, and to make us cry out; Lord! what is man, that thou art mindful of him, and the ſon of man, that thou ſo regardeſt him, ſo as to have laid up for him ſuch an exceeding great reward for being faithful in a few things? What are all our beſt performances to ſuch an eternal and exceeding great reward? What are our mites of charity to an Heavenly Kingdom, a crown that fadeth not away? What are our weak endeavours to reclaim our brethren from the evil and error of their ways in compariſon of the blotting out all our own tranſgreſſions, and that glory, that ſhall be revealed; when the righteous ſhall ſhine, as the brightneſs

neſs of the firmament, and as the ſtars for ever and ever? What are our light and momentary afflictions; yea, what are the ſufferings of Apoſtles and Martyrs, when put in the ſcale againſt ſuch an exceeding and eternal weight of glory? Let us now reflect a little upon what hath been ſaid. We ſee then that nothing leſs than that fidelity, which was deſcribed under the firſt head of our diſcourſe, can free us from the fear of puniſhment, much leſs afford us a joyful expectation of that future bliſs, which was but faintly delineated under the ſecond. Can we ſay, Lord, we have endeavoured to improve the talents, which thou didſt commit to our truſt and to promote thy glory and the good of our brethren in the uſe of them, according to our capacities and ſtations in the world, and the ſeveral opportunities, thou haſt afforded us, and by the aſſiſtance of thy grace we hope to perſevere unto the end ſo to do? Then may we have confidence towards God. But if otherwiſe, it behoves us timely to conſider the great danger of infinite loſs and pain, in which we every moment ſtand; to take care, that we may be able to give a good account of our ſtewardſhip, when we may be no longer ſtewards; to reſolve

to

to begin, if we have not already begun, to be faithful ſtewards of the manifold gifts of God; and if we have then to perſevere in well-doing, ſince we know, that in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not; preſſing forward towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus, which will vaſtly overpay us for all our expence and labour, though they were ten thouſand times greater than they poſſibly can be. It is but a few things, in which we can be faithful; and ſhall we not be faithful in thoſe few things to be made rulers over many things, and enter into the joy of our Lord? Is it happineſs we are in purſuit of? Let us not be miſtaken in our choice; all the happineſs of this world is as nothing, when compared with that of the next. Is it honour? The joint ſuffrage of men and angels, is but emptineſs and air in compariſon of this divine approbation: Well done good and faithful ſervant; thou haſt been faithful in a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

FROM what hath now been ſaid, ſome inferences may be deduced, that may, in ſome degree, alleviate the pain of our preſent affliction, and alſo move us to imitate thoſe good and faithful ſervants, that are gone before us. Such then is the work, and ſuch will be the reward of the faithful Chriſtian; and if our deceaſed friend and brother hath carefully performed the work, we may not doubt, but that he hath alſo received the reward. If he did diligently improve the talents committed to his truſt, and alſo faithfully apply them to the honour of God and the welfare of his fellow-creatures. If God gave him the means of doing good, and together with them an heart rightly diſpoſed to make a proper uſe of them: If he, influenced by the grace of God, which is the higheſt degree of merit we have any pretenſions to, hath wiſely made to himſelf friends of the mammon of unrighteouſneſs: If he hath fed the hungry, clothed the naked, relieved the diſtreſſed, viſited, with his charitable aſſiſtance, the ſick and afflicted; and adorned the Chriſtian profeſſion, by

by an inoffenſive, upright, benevolent, amiable and exemplary converſation; may we not reſt aſſured, that he hath obtained the approbation of his Lord; that being abſent from the body, he is now preſent with him; that thoſe friends, which he made to himſelf by the pious diſtribution of the good things of this world, have received him into everlaſting habitations; and that he is entered into the joy of his Lord? Hitherto I have drawn concluſions from ſuppoſitions only: But who is there amongſt you, to whom our deceaſed brother's life and converſation was in any degree known, that would ſuſpect me of flattery to the living or the dead, ſhould I turn theſe ſuppoſitions into ſo many poſitive declarations? This numerous aſſembly, thoſe dejected countenances, thoſe deep ſighs and dropping tears, are inſtead of a thouſand witneſſes, that he ſurely was that good man, we have ſuppoſed him to be. And as thoſe good Chriſtians, who have ſo early attained to ſuch an high degree of grace and virtue, who have ſo long walked in the way, wherein they ſhould go, and ſo long found by experience the ways of religion to be ways of pleaſantneſs, and all its paths, peace, do ſel-

dom depart from it and fall away; we may not doubt, but that if it had pleaſed God to have continued him longer amongſt us, he would have continued to be the ſame Iſraelite indeed, the ſame good Samaritan, the ſame uſeful member of ſociety, the ſame friend to all mankind, the ſame living example of a moſt benevolent, upright, charitable and Chriſtian converſation. Theſe, I preſume, are as truly your ſentiments concerning the deceaſed, as they are my own: A ſincere friend and uſeful neighbour is taken from us, ſome will ſay; We have loſt a generous benefactor; may the poor and the diſtreſſed ſay; We a dutiful ſon, a tender and affectionate huſband, father, brother; may others, that are more nearly related, ſay. For theſe, and other reaſons, which I need not mention, there will be no indecency, if we ſhould bedew his hearſe with the tears of humanity. This is a tribute, that nature itſelf demands; but we muſt take care that no unguarded complaint diſhonour our faith, or do imply a doubt either of the wiſdom or goodneſs of God. We muſt not ſorrow, as thoſe that have no hope. We muſt endeavour to learn the Pſalmiſt's leſſon, and ſay with him, I was dumb and opened not my mouth,

mouth, becauſe it was thy doing; and in imitation of the patience of Job ſay, The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; bleſſed be the name of the Lord; or with a yet more perfect pattern of a pious reſignation, not my will, O God! but thine be done: To ſuch as do thus ſubmit their own wills to the will of God, and put their truſt in his goodneſs and paternal care, his gracious promiſe ſtands moſt ſure; he will never leave them, nor forſake them. For though his judgments be unſearchable, and his ways paſt finding out, yet are his counſels always guided not only by infinite juſtice, but infinite wiſdom and goodneſs alſo. And, therefore, though we muſt not preſume to determine the particular motives inducing the Almighty Diſpoſer of all things to take unto himſelf ſuch good and uſeful members of ſociety, even in the fulneſs of their ſtrength; yet many juſt reaſons may be aſſigned, all of them tending to induce us to bring our minds to an entire acquieſcence in the divine diſpenſations. It may be, that it was the gracious deſign of Providence to exerciſe the faith, patience, and pious reſignation of the ſurvivors: It may be, that he intended to teach us all to withdraw our confidence from

all

all other objects, and to place it on himself alone; to teach all, to whom such seemingly severe dispensations are known, to sit loose to this transitory world; to set their affections on things above, and not on things on the earth; from which they sometimes see the best of men, to whom in a peculiar manner the promise even of temporal blessings is made, so suddenly removed. It may be to alarm the fears of the supine, secure, and inconsiderate sinner, when he sees that virtue and innocence are not always a protection against the sudden attacks of disease and death, which, without a timely repentance, might consign him over to eternal misery. For if the just, the good, the chaste, the temperate, the charitable and the godly, are sometimes taken away, before they have ascended up to the Meridian of Life; upon what grounds can the unjust, the lewd, the intemperate, the uncharitable and unmerciful, the wicked and ungodly, expect to live out half their days? Whose life, were it not for the patience and long suffering of God towards them, would not be continued to them, no, not for a moment? How greatly then should such events as these, by which we are all of us so sensibly affected, alarm the sleepy sinner and awaken

awaken him to a ſenſe of his danger, before it be too late, before his feet ſtumble upon the dark mountains, and the things, that belong to his peace, be for ever hid from his eyes? And how ſhould they quicken every one of us in our preparations for eternity, that we may be provided with the wedding garment, with oil in our lamps, and our lights burning; that whenſoever the cry is made, behold the Bridegroom cometh, we may be ready to enter in with him to the marriage, whether it be at midnight or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning? To conclude, if ſuch events have theſe effects upon us, then though our departed friends may not return to us, yet ere long we ſhall go to them, never after to be divorced from them. And let us comfort ourſelves with this conſideration, that the greater our loſs is on this occaſion, the greater is his gain; and that though it be grievous to us, yet it muſt be joyous to him; that he hath obtained the prize, and been diſcharged from a dangerous warfare ſooner, than we or he perhaps expected. Take we care then, that ſhould death come haſtily upon us, and ſooner than we expect it may not find us leſs prepared; always remembering, that kind admonition

nition of our bleſſed Lord to his Diſciples; Watch, therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour, wherein the Son of Man cometh, leſt coming ſuddenly, he find you ſleeping.—To him, with God the Father, and the Holy Spirit, be rendered and aſcribed, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and henceforth for ever.—*Amen*.

SERMON XI.

SERMON XI.

This Sermon was preached in ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, *in* LIVERPOOL, *on the 6th of October*, 1745.

St. Jude's Epiſtle, ver. 3. *Beloved, when I gave all Diligence to write unto you of the common Salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you, that ye ſhould earneſtly contend for the Faith, which was once delivered to the Saints.*

NO ſooner had the careful huſbandman ſowed good ſeed in his field, but the enemy came and ſowed tares. It is amazing to obſerve, how many denominations of Heretics

 are

are to be met with in the very times of the Apoſtles; Judaizers, Ebionites, Cerinthians, Gnoſtics, Nicolaitans and others; all which, notwithſtanding their difference in particular opinions, agreed in preaching another Goſpel, than that which Chriſt and his Apoſtles had preached. Such was the unhappy ſtate of the Church in its very infancy: Such it hath been ever ſince, and in all probability will be to the end of the world.

THERE muſt be Hereſies among you, ſaith St. Paul to the Corinthians, that they who are approved, may be made manifeſt: Such is the pride, envy, and other the corrupt affections of the hearts of men, that they will give birth to Hereſies among you: And hence, it will come to paſs, that they, who are approved, will be made manifeſt; the wiſdom of God permitting them to be, but not deſigning them for this end. The neceſſity of ſuch Hereſies ariſing from a ſuppoſition of corruption in the heart of man, ſo long as there ſhall be found men of corrupt minds amongſt the profeſſors of Chriſtianity; ſo long we muſt expect to find falſe teachers and ſeducers alſo amongſt them. As there

there were in the Church, at the time when St. Jude wrote this Epiſtle, ungodly men unawares crept in, who turned the Grace of God into Laſciviouſneſs, who preached another Goſpel, than that which was once delivered to the Saints, and who denied the only Lord God, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: So there are in theſe our days but too many, who do the ſame things, whom it is the duty of every good Chriſtian, but eſpecially of every faithful Miniſter of the Goſpel, to oppoſe with all his might; earneſtly contending for the Faith, which was once delivered to the Saints. Therefore, in a further diſcourſe upon theſe words of the Apoſtle, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

FIRST, What that Faith is, which was once delivered to the Saints.

SECONDLY, That it is our duty earneſtly to contend for it. And,

THIRDLY, How or by what means it is to be contended for. And,

FIRST, by Faith we are to underſtand a firm aſſent to all the Doctrines, which have been re-

vealed to us, concerning our duty to God and our redemption by Jeſus Chriſt. But here it is put objectively, not for an aſſent to thoſe Doctrines, but the Doctrines themſelves. And St. Jude hath given us a ſufficient mark, whereby to diſtinguiſh them from all others. They are thoſe Doctrines, which had been delivered to the Saints or Church of God, when he wrote this Epiſtle. St. Paul ſpeaks of the Chriſtian Doctrine as fully delivered and well known ſome years before, even when he wrote his Epiſtle to the Galatians, "I marvel, that ye are ſo ſoon removed from him, that called you into the Grace of Chriſt, unto another Goſpel. But though we, or an angel from Heaven, preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that, which we have preached unto you, let him be accurſed. As we ſaid before, ſo ſay I now again, if any man preach any other Goſpel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accurſed." Hence, it appears, that a man may err fundamentally, not only by rejecting an article of Faith, but alſo by maintaining and teaching in the name of Chriſt things unneceſſary, ſo as to ſay Salvation cannot be had without them. And herein conſiſts the great guilt of the Church of Rome,

Rome, they have added many unneceſſary articles to the Faith once delivered to the Saints, which they have declared to be ſo neceſſary, that no Salvation can be obtained without the belief of them, and a practice agreeable thereto. And ſo they ſeem plainly to have fallen under St. Paul's Anathema, more to be dreaded, than all their vain Anathemas againſt the Proteſtants.

THERE are ſome who ſuppoſe, that the Apoſtle ſpeaks only of ſuch Doctrines, as are contrary to his Goſpel; but his words are not a contrary, but any other Goſpel than that, which he had preached unto them. Thoſe, whom St. Paul oppoſes, joined the law of Moſes to the faith of Chriſt, as neceſſary to be obſerved by Chriſtians. And what do the Papiſts leſs by their new articles and traditionary Doctrines? For if they be indeed neceſſary to Salvation, then what is delivered in the Goſpel (in which confeſſedly many of their Doctrines are not) cannot be ſufficient to Salvation; nay, it is evident, that many of their Doctrines are not only different from, but directly contrary to the Apoſtle's Doctrine; as I ſhall have occaſion to ſhew more particularly in the ſequel. It

wold

would be derogatory to the wiſdom and goodneſs of God to ſuppoſe, that he had left blanks, in the great charter of our redemption, to be filled up by human fancy. It is in fact to give the lie to St. Paul himſelf, who hath poſitively declared, " That all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for inſtruction in righteouſneſs; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furniſhed unto every good work." If then the ſcriptures of the Old Teſtament are here to be underſtood, as ſome ſuppoſe, and were ſufficient to make a man wiſe unto Salvation, provided only, that he believed, that Jeſus was the Chriſt; ſurely the ſcriptures of both the Old and New Teſtament muſt much more be ſo: Becauſe the latter do more plainly and fully contain the faith and duty of all Chriſtians, than the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament only can be ſuppoſed to do. Therefore, the Faith, which we are to contend for, comprehends all thoſe Doctrines, relating to the Meſſiah, that were but obſcurely taught in the writings of the Old Teſtament, and all thoſe precepts, that are found therein; ſuch only, as have had their completion and attained their end in the coming

ing of the Meſſiah, excepted; but more eſpecially all thoſe Doctrines that are contained in the books of the New Teſtament, and were more plainly taught by Chriſt, and his Apoſtles: If they are not found there, either expreſſly declared or neceſſarily implied, they are not the Goſpel of Chriſt, but mere human devices; and he, that preacheth ſuch new articles of Faith, or requireth obedience to ſuch commandments of men, as in themſelves of neceſſity to Salvation, is an accurſed thing; he is one that troubleth the Church of God, and perverteth the Goſpel of Chriſt. And whether it be by addition to, or ſubtraction from the terms of the Covenant, contained in the Holy Scriptures, he forfeits his title to the happineſs promiſed to the faithful, and becomes liable to the plagues and curſes denounced againſt the ungodly and unbelieving in that Book. For thus, ſaith the Spirit, by the beloved Diſciple and Holy Evangeliſt, St. John: (Rev. 22, 18, 19,) "If any man ſhall add unto theſe things, God ſhall add unto him the plagues, that are written in this Book: And if any man ſhall take away from the words of the Book of this Prophecy, God ſhall take his part out of the Book of Life, and

out

out of the Holy City, and from the things, which are written in this Book." Surely ſuch a clauſe in the very end of the laſt book in the ſacred Canon, written by the only ſurviving Apoſtle, was not ſo placed without deſign; but muſt have been intended to ſeal up the viſion and prophecy, ſo far, at leaſt, as to be an effectual bar againſt all innovation in the conditions of Salvation laid down in the Goſpel.

FROM what hath been ſaid, it muſt follow, that no pretence of authority or infallibility can warrant any man or body of men, in diſpenſing with the precepts, injunctions or prohibitions of the Goſpel, or in the addition of any new article of faith or new commandment, other, than what are found therein, either expreſſly declared or neceſſarily implied. For no man may pretend to more authority, or a farther remove from fallibility, than an inſpired Apoſtle or an Angel from Heaven; neither may any man or number of men do that, which every man is forbid to do; under the ſevereſt penalties, the forfeiture of eternal happineſs, and the infliction of eternal pain.

THUS

THUS we have a ſure teſt, by which to try all Doctrines, viz. The written word of God. By this we may ſafely determine, whether they be the objects of that faith, we are ſo earneſtly to contend for, or not. If any Doctrine be agreeable thereto, it is to be received; if contrary thereto, yea, if not comprehended therein, to be rejected. "To the law and to the teſtimony," ſaith the prophet Iſaiah: To the glorious Goſpel of the Son of God, ſay we: "If they ſpeak not according to this rule, it is becauſe there is no light in them." No new terms of Salvation are now to be added to thoſe declared in the Goſpel, which is the grand charter of man's redemption by Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. St. Paul's reaſoning againſt all innovation in matters of faith or duty is concluſive. "Brethren, I ſpeak after the manner of men; though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man diſannulleth, or addeth thereto." But if it be ſo criminal and penal, according to the ſentence of human laws, to diſannul or add to a man's covenant, how much more in the ſight of God, to corrupt that covenant, which he hath made with man, in the blood of his only begotten Son?

It cannot here be expected, that I ſhould particularly enumerate all thoſe doctrines, precepts or prohibitions, that are the objects of this Faith, which we are ſo earneſtly to contend for. That would be, in ſome meaſure, to tranſcribe the whole Goſpel. Do but read the Scriptures diligently with a teachable and humble Spirit, carefully obſerving what is plain in them, and believe and live accordingly; and you will not want a ſufficient and ſure rule both of faith and duty. You need not perplex yourſelves with what is obſcure and difficult; for in that, ſo far as it is above your comprehenſion, your duty is not deſcribed.

But though it may be unneceſſary particularly to enumerate the doctrines, relative to the faith or practice of a Chriſtian to you, who have free acceſs to thoſe rivers of pure water, to which, whoſoever will, is invited to come, and take thereof freely: Yet ſurely it is both fit and neceſſary at this time, that we ſhould mention at leaſt ſome of thoſe novel doctrines, that have unawares crept into the Church of Chriſt, by which its Faith hath been corrupted, its liberty invaded, its worſhip adulterated, and its morals

morals depraved; by which many things have been added to, and many things taken from the Goſpel-rule of a Chriſtian's Faith and Duty.— And ſuch are theſe, which follow: viz. That the Church of Rome is the Mother and Miſtreſs of all Churches: That the Bread and Wine uſed in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper are after Conſecration tranſubſtantiated into the very natural body and blood of Chriſt, in which he ſuffered on the Croſs; and in which, after its change into a ſpiritual and glorious Body, he aſcended up into Heaven; where he ever ſitteth on the right hand of God: That the Sacrament is to be received in one kind; and that under one kind only whole and entire Chriſt is taken and received by the worthy Communicant: That the Hoſt is to be adored: That Saints and Angels are to be invoked, as Mediators or Interceſſors: That Images are to be worſhipped; and Reliques had in veneration: That it is a mortal ſin, in any perſon ordained to the ſacred Miniſtry, to marry: That the public ſervice in Chriſtian congregations, is to be performed in an unknown tongue: That there is a place of Purgation, by material fire, for the ſouls of men after death, out of which

they may be the ſooner releaſed by the ſuffrages of the faithful, but eſpecially of the Prieſt, by Prayers to be ſaid, or Maſſes ſung: That the uſe of the Holy Scriptures is not to be indulged the Laity: That the power of indulgences was left by Chriſt in the Church, and that the uſe of them is very beneficial to Chriſtian people. All which Doctrines and many more, that I could mention, are novel additions to that faith, which was once delivered to the Saints, falſe and dangerous Doctrines, evidently tending to the increaſe of ſuperſtition and idolatry, of ignorance and ſlavery in the people; and of the wealth and tyranny of the Romiſh Prieſthood. And indeed all their novel Doctrines are plainly calculated to promote the gratification of the avarice, luſt, luxury, and ambition of that whole order of men, but eſpecially of the Holy See.

But what man is there among us of common underſtanding, that doth not know that there was a Chriſtian Church at Jeruſalem, before there was one at Rome:— That the Doctrine of Tranſubſtantiation is attended with many abſurd and impoſſible conſequences;

conſequences ; ſuch as, that the thing repreſenting and repreſented may be the ſame: That one and the ſame body may be ten thouſand whole and entire bodies, and in as many different places, at one and the ſame time: That the ſenſes of all mankind, duly exerciſed about their proper objects, may deceive them ; a ſuppoſition, that ſubverts all the evidences of the truth of any religion. Who knoweth not, that a religious adoration of any created being is Idolatry? That both the ſacred elements in the Holy Communion, are to be received by every Communicant according to its original inſtitution ; not to ſpeak of the manifeſt abſurdity of affirming, that in the moſt holy ſacrament of the Euchariſt, there is a converſion made of the whole ſubſtance of the Bread into the Body of Chriſt, and of the whole ſubſtance of the Wine into the Blood of Chriſt; and yet, that under one kind only, whole and entire Chriſt is taken and received? Who, that is converſant in the Holy Scriptures, can be ignorant, that the worſhip of Angels and conſequently of Saints is expreſſly forbidden in them? That praying to them, as it implies a recognition of one divine attribute at leaſt in them, is Sacrilege and Idolatry,

latry, manifeſtly derogatory to the honour of God and of his Son Jeſus Chriſt, the only Mediator between God and Man, our great High Prieſt and Interceſſor at the throne of Grace: Who knoweth not, that image worſhip is groſs Idolatry in direct oppoſition to the ſecond commandment; and will for ever be ſo in ſpite of all Scholaſtic diſtinctions? That marriage is honourable in all, thoſe that are ordained to the Miniſtry, not excluded? That prayers and ſermons in an unknown tongue, cannot conduce to the edification of the people, but make the Prieſt a Barbarian to the Congregation, in which he ſerveth, and them to him? Which of us knoweth not, that we ſhall hereafter be judged according to the deeds done in the body; that there is no repentance in the grave; that as the tree falls, ſo it lies? And, therefore, that the Doctrine of Purgatory is as evidently contrary to the truth of the Goſpel, and prejudicial to the Souls of men, as it is beneficial to the Romiſh Prieſthood, and ſubſervient to the increaſe of the revenues of the Apoſtolic Chamber? Laſtly, who knoweth not, that it is profitable, commendable, and our duty to ſearch the Holy Scriptures; and, conſequently, that it is a ſacrilegious

crilegious robbery to debar the people of God from a free acceſs to theſe living waters?— But whatever may be the pretence of that crafty Hierarchy for this ſpiritual monopoly; their true motive is, that the ignorance of their Diſciples may diſpoſe them the more eaſily to digeſt implicit faith, ſuperſtition, pageantry, poverty, tribute and a ſervile ſubjection.

HAVING thus ſhewn, how we may know what that faith is, which all Chriſtians are obliged earneſtly to contend for; and pointed out ſome of thoſe many novel Doctrines, (for who could recount them all?) which we are conſequently to contend againſt; I proceed in the next place to the reaſons of our obligation ſo to do.

SECONDLY.—And, firſt, we find in the Holy Scriptures many earneſt exhortations, and commands, requiring this duty from us: Such as "Buy the truth and ſell it not. Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good. Hold faſt the form of ſound words, which thou haſt heard of me in Faith and Love, which is in Chriſt Jeſus. That good thing, which was committed unto thee,

thee, keep by the Holy Ghoſt, which dwelleth in us. Let us hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering: For he is faithful, that hath promiſed. As ye have received Chriſt Jeſus, the Lord, ſo walk ye in him, rooted and built up in him, and ſtabliſhed in the Faith, as ye have been taught". In which laſt words St. Paul plainly intimates to the Philippians, that it would give him great joy to hear, that they ſtood faſt in one ſpirit, with one mind, ſtriving together for the faith of the Goſpel, being in nothing terrified by their adverſaries, which was to them an evident token of Perdition, but to themſelves of Salvation, and that of God; it being given to them in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe in him, but alſo to ſuffer for his ſake. What can be the end of all theſe exhortations and injunctions; but that we ſhould henceforth be no more children toſſed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine, by the ſleight of men, and cunning craftineſs, whereby they lie in wait to deceive? But that we ſhould earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the Saints?

HENCE

HENCE it plainly appears to be every Chriſtian's duty to labour after the knowledge of the Truth; to purchaſe it at any rate, and when purchaſed to hold it faſt. But if duty did not; yet gratitude and our own intereſt would oblige us earneſtly to contend for God's truth. If we and many thouſands more were travelling in a dark and barren wilderneſs, through which many croſs-roads lay; one only leading to a land of affluence and ſecurity; but all the reſt to dens of wild beaſts, precipices, gulfs, and inevitable deſtruction: If in ſuch anxiety and diſtreſs a friendly guide, on whoſe ſincerity and ſkill we might ſafely rely, ſhould freely offer to conduct us to that happy country, we were ſeeking for, without either fear or danger; in ſuch a caſe as this, ſhould we not think ourſelves infinitely obliged to ſuch a friendly guide? Should we not turn a deaf ear to any, that might endeavour to divert us from following him? Should we not in compaſſion to our fellow-travellers, earneſtly diſſuade them from liſtening to a ſpirit of deluſion? Nay, ſhould any attempt by force and violence to obſtruct our paſſage, would we not exert our whole ſtrength in marching forwards in ſpite of all oppoſition?

And this the more, when we conſidered, that by ſo doing we ſhould in the moſt acceptable manner, oblige the kind director, who had aſſured us, that in ſuch difficulties we might depend upon ſufficient aſſiſtance from him.

SUCH is the condition of our Pilgrimage here on earth, but worſe the conſequence of a wilful deſertion of the truth. God is Truth, and he delighteth in the Truth. "Our bleſſed Saviour is the Way, the Truth and the Life." He would have all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, which he hath plainly revealed, that they may be ſaved. And this leads me to a ſecond conſideration, viz.

THAT errors in matters of Religion lead to everlaſting deſtruction. They tend to the diſhonour of God, the debaſement and corruption of human nature; they render us unfit for the enjoyment of God, in which our ultimate happineſs conſiſts. Great is the guilt of the deceived; though that of the deceiver be greater. For no man, that hath once known the Truth, can be deceived without being in ſome degree a partaker in the deluſion. Neither can any man,

of

of an honeſt and upright mind, be long deceived, from whom the light of the Goſpel is not with-holden. "For if any man will do the will of God, he ſhall eaſily judge of any doctrine, whether it be of God." The great articles of our Faith, and all the rules of a Chriſtian's duty, are ſo plainly laid down in Holy Scripture, that where the love of Truth is not wanting (and the want of that affection is a crime of the firſt magnitude) it is almoſt impoſſible, that a man of common ſenſe ſhould be miſtaken. This is the reaſon, that it is ſo great a crime to be deceived: And that ſo many charitable cautions are given us, to take heed that we be not deceived. Beware of falſe Prophets. "Take heed how ye hear." "Beware leſt any man ſpoil you through Philoſophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Chriſt." "Let no man beguile you of your reward in a voluntary humility and worſhipping of angels, intruding into thoſe things, which he hath not ſeen, vainly puffed up of his own fleſhly mind." Many ſuch earneſt cautions are to be met with in the Holy Scriptures. I ſhall only add, that St. Peter having obſerved, that many, who

were unlearned and unſtable, did wreſt the Scriptures to their own deſtruction, ſubjoins this caution: "Ye, therefore, beloved, ſeeing ye know theſe things before, beware, leſt ye alſo, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own ſtedfaſtneſs;" and it may be juſtly added, of conſequence into the ſame deſtruction.

When people have been unhappily born, and bred up in countries, where falſe Doctrines and falſe Worſhip have been univerſally taught and practiced, and have from their infancy received thoſe falſe doctrines, as the truth of God, and joined in Superſtitions and Idolatries, as the moſt acceptable inſtances of divine worſhip: When through the ſtrength of ſuch prejudices, the light of the Goſpel being hid from them, they have never doubted, or through the terrors of a barbarous inquiſition, they have not dared to doubt, but that they were in the right way; we may reaſonably, and in charity we are bound to hope, that God will be merciful to ſuch, as have ſerved him with an honeſt heart, notwithſtanding the invincible errors, by which they have been blinded. But if when we

we might have ſeen and known the truth, we would not, or did obſtinately ſhut our eyes againſt it; ſuch affected, wilful blindneſs muſt be penal. But, if after we have received the knowledge of the truth, and had a clear perception of the force of that evidence, by which it is ſupported, we deſert it through the proſpect of honour, pleaſure, gain, or the terrors of perſecution even unto death, then we forfeit the glorious privileges and promiſes of the Goſpel, become objects of God's juſt wrath and vengeance, heirs of death and damnation. To oppoſe, deny, or renounce the truth of the Goſpel is in effect to deny Chriſt himſelf. And, "Whoſoever denieth him before men, him will he alſo deny before his Father, which is in Heaven." And, "Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of him, or of his words, in the midſt of an adulterous and perverſe generation; of him ſhall the Son of Man be aſhamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy Angels." He who, when his faith and zeal for God's truth is brought to this teſt, "Hateth not his own life, cannot be Chriſt's Diſciple." "If any man do thus draw back, God will have no pleaſure in him." A certain fearful look-

ing

ing for of judgment and fiery indignation will ſooner, than he may think, be the conſequence of ſuch apoſtacy, which at the laſt will terminate in his eternal ruin. "He only that endures to the end ſhall be ſaved." "And he muſt finiſh his courſe, and keep the faith, that would receive the Crown of Life."

AND here, methinks, I ought not to omit ſo fair an opportunity of expoſing the fallacy of that popular argument, by which too many ignorant and unſtable ſouls have been beguiled. You, Proteſtants, ſay theſe deceivers of our brethren, do allow a poſſibility of Salvation to perſons in the Communion of the Church of Rome: We, on the contrary, do peremptorily deny, that any man can poſſibly be ſaved in yours, or any other but our own. Therefore it is confeſſedly more ſafe to return into the boſom of your holy Mother, the Church of Rome, and to ſubmit yourſelves to the Holy Father of the Holy See; by theſe and ſuch other pompous words, meaning no more, than that it is more ſafe to be a Papiſt than a Proteſtant.

"BUT

"But who art thou, that judgeſt another man's ſervant? To his own Maſter he ſhall ſtand or fall." Verily, one would be tempted to think, that ſuch a raſh, uncharitable judgment, as is implied in their aſſertion, was not the diſtinguiſhing character of God's peculiar people, the only Saints in all the world. Proteſtants, it ſeems, have more truth, humanity and charity in their religion, than they, who very abſurdly, to the excluſion of all other Chriſtians, call themſelves Catholics: Therefore the religion of theſe pretended Catholics is the only true religion. If they will draw concluſions from their own aſſertions, what may they not prove? But if they will argue from our conceſſions, let them take our aſſertions alſo along with them. We ſay then, we do not deny, yea, we charitably hope, that God will ſhew mercy to a poor ignorant Papiſt, whoſe errors were the effect of ignorance invincible, though he were ſuperſtitious, or an idolator, &c. if at the ſame time he ſerved God with an upright heart, according to the beſt light he had. But when a man doth, or might know better, did he not ſhut his eyes againſt the light; yet perſeveres in his idolatry or ſuperſtition, as they do;

do; and perhaps in his perſecution of all thoſe, who ſtand up in the defence of the truth, in oppoſition to his errors: Why then, though it becomes not us to paſs the ſentence of damnation upon any man, much leſs upon whole millions at a breath; yet we ſay, that ſuch a man's caſe is extremely dangerous; ſo dangerous, that we would not lie under the ſame guilt, to gain the world. We ſay further, that the Chriſtian Religion is taught in truth and purity amongſt us, and not amongſt them; that ſuch of their doctrines, as we proteſt againſt, are directly contrary to the letter and ſpirit of the Goſpel, and extremely pernicious, both to the temporal and ſpiritual welfare of mankind. From theſe conceſſions thus truly ſtated, let them draw juſt concluſions, and we ſhall willingly reſt the merits of the cauſe upon them.

To return from this digreſſion, if we have any zeal for the ſaving truths of the Goſpel, for the ſake of which, ſo many holy Martyrs have endured the ſevereſt tortures, "not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better reſurrection;" if we have any compaſſion for our own ſouls, or thoſe of other men; any

regard

regard to the repeated commands of God, any gratitude to him for the continuance of all his temporal and ſpiritual bleſſings to us; if we would not forfeit all our title to his preſent and future favours, and incur his infinite and eternal vengeance, we muſt earneſtly contend for the faith, which was once delivered to the Saints.

And, ſure, there never was a time of greater neceſſity for our thus contending for this faith, than now; now, when we are expoſed to all the dangers and calamities of a foreign war, threatened with powerful invaſions from abroad, and when a moſt unnatural rebellion, formed and fomented by the policy and malice of the two moſt formidable powers in Europe, the inveterate enemies of this church and nation, hath ſprung up with that ſuddenneſs, and proceeded with a ſucceſs, that hath juſtly alarmed the whole nation; now, when great numbers of rebellious ruffians and traitors, headed by a long abjured Popiſh Pretender, are eating into the very vitals of this united kingdom; and all this a mere prelude only to what may be expected, if our malicious enemies can carry their

long projected ſchemes into effect. Shall then our enemies be ſo vigilant, ſubtle, ſecret, active, and we ſuffer ourſelves, to be lulled into a fatal ſecurity by Pretenders to moderation, or by Jeſuitical ſophiſtry and deluſion, in a time of ſuch imminent and apparent danger of utter ruin to all our civil and religious rights, our liberty, property, religion and life itſelf? We are told by ſome, that if this Bigot-Pupil of France and Rome, the ſeats of Superſtition and Tyranny, ſhould prevail, (which God avert) he would content himſelf with the exerciſe of his own religion, without forcing the conſcience of any man, and would maintain all our civil and religious rights. The Ethiopian hath changed his ſkin, and the Leopard his ſpots! The ſame cauſes and principles, acting under the ſame circumſtances, will not produce the ſame effects in theſe, as in the former days! And Faith will now be kept with Heretics, that never was before! Ah! Who is ſo blind as he that will not ſee? Ah! Who can but lament the wretched ſtate of human nature, ſo liable to be deluded to its own deſtruction? Are we ſo ſtupid, that we cannot underſtand the juſt value of the envied bleſſings we enjoy, until they are loſt?

BUT if it be a maxim with them, that no Faith is to be kept with thoſe, whom they call Heretics; or, which is the ſame thing in effect, if they never did keep faith with them, when treachery, falſehood or perjury would advance the Catholic cauſe; then, ſure, it ought to be a maxim with us, to whom they give that odious name, which moſt properly belongs to themſelves, to put no confidence in their colluſive promiſes or oaths. And now let hiſtories of former times declare, how religiouſly they have obſerved their ſolemn declarations and plighted faith.

JOHN of Hus, and Jerome of Prague, were burnt to death for pretended Hereſy, notwithſtanding the Emperor's Paſſport to the former, and that of the Council of Conſtance to the latter: But the Emperor was not obliged to keep his promiſe with an Heretic; and the Council's Paſſport, according to their own interpretation, extended only to Jerome's coming, but not to his return, A reconciling marriage is projected and nuptial feaſts prepared; and then the ſcene is changed into a Pariſian Maſſacre. Abſalom invites his brother to a feaſt,

makes his heart merry, and then commands him to be ſlain. See how the holy Catholics have improved upon this example of brotherly love and friendſhip.

But what need have we to look beyond the ſeas for inſtances of ſuch perfidious cruelties.—Caſt but your eyes upon the Marian Perſecution. This good-natured Queen, with the moſt ill-natured faith, gives ſolemn aſſurances to the men of Suffolk, that ſhe would not alter the religion ſet up in King Edward's days, but would be content with the private exerciſe of her own; declares in council, that though ſhe was fixed in her own religion, yet ſhe would not compel others to it; but would leave that to the motions of God's Spirit, and the labours of good Preachers: Yet in her ſhort, but bloody reign, many hundreds were burnt for Religion by her authority, many being tempted to a recantation by promiſes of life, liberty and eſtate; and then committed to the flames for fear of a relapſe into their former Hereſy, it being alledged, that if they recanted ſincerely, they were fit to die; if not, not fit to live. But ah! a much more ſhocking ſcene begins to open to my

my view: Methinks, I hear the diſmal ſhrieks and groans of thouſands juſt expiring, murdered in cold blood after the moſt ſolemn aſſurances of ſafe conduct, or quarter given, confirmed by ſealed covenants, and oaths in the grand Iriſh maſſacre Behold here a ſpecimen of Popiſh Faith and Mercy? Bleſſed Jeſus! That ever the powers of darkneſs ſhould have been able to pervert into an inſtrument of the moſt inhuman cruelties that Holy Religion, which thou broughteſt down from Heaven to earth, breathing peace and univerſal charity!

MANY more inſtances of Popiſh treachery and cruelty, both foreign and domeſtic, might be produced and ſupported by the moſt credible teſtimony; but theſe are ſufficient for the conviction of any impartial judgment, that the principles and doctrines of Popery do naturally diveſt its votaries of all humanity, and utterly diſſolve all ſocial ties, when ever the intereſts of their holy church claſh with them.

I muſt not however omit to deſire you to recollect that recent inſtance of violated faith, which the people of this nation ought never

to

to forget, and which, I hope, will be the laſt, they will ever have reaſon to remember; I mean that which brought on the happy Revolution, under the auſpicious conduct of his late Majeſty, King William of glorious Memory. Such was the indiſcreet zeal of James the Second, to extirpate the Proteſtant religion, that it rendered him the contempt, even of the Pope himſelf. Such was his Bigotry and Luſt of lawleſs power, that he choſe rather to run the riſk of exchanging St. James's for St. Germains; and the revenues of three kingdoms for a French Penſion, than not advance the Catholic cauſe. Whoever conſiders the circumſtances of our deliverance from the dangers, that then threatened this Church and Nation, muſt own, that it was the work of God, and marvelous in our eyes.

And are no certain concluſions to be drawn from the repeated experience of former ages? Are we ſo blinded by the artful inſinuations of the inveterate and ſworn enemies of our peace, that neither reaſon arguing from cauſes to their natural effects, nor from the experience of what hath been to what will be in parallel caſes, can convince

convince us, that all, that is dear to us, or our poſterity, as free-born Proteſtants, is now attempted to be violently wreſted from us, not only by foreign enemies, but alſo by a moſt criminal and traiterous rebellion? Whatſoever effects and conſequences any thing hath formerly and uſually had, and in its own nature is apt to produce, it is infinitely ſottiſh and irrational to imagine, that it will not produce the ſame for the future. That a Papiſt, who, from his childhood, hath implicitly given up his Chriſtian liberty to his Prieſt, ſhould as freely reſign his civil rights alſo to any bold Invader, is no wonder: But that a Proteſtant, who hath derived them, as an inheritance from his anceſtors, and long enjoyed them both inviolate, ſhould be deluded into an open hoſtility againſt the beſt of Kings, his lawful Sovereign; againſt his country, children, and lateſt poſterity, his civil and religious rights, into parricide and ſelf-murder by a few gingling words, with ideas thereunto annexed, repreſenting things, that never had exiſtence in any nation throughout the world; that abſolute paſſive obedience, indefeaſible hereditary-right, and ſuch like airy notions, the mere fictions of an evil Jeſuit's brain,

brain, ſhould, like a magic ſpell, infatuate, and tempt men to renounce their allegiance to their lawful Sovereign at the manifeſt hazard of eſtate and life, to join an inſurrection of deſperate banditti in the overthrow of our happy conſtitution both in church and ſtate, is a prodigy without a parallel. Well may thoſe grand deceivers, with wonder, triumph in the ſtrange effects of their deluſions. But theſe deluded, ſelf-deluding traitors deſerve not more our pity, than our indignation and the juſt puniſhments by law appointed to ſuch flagitious crimes.—And, therefore, I have often taught, that ſince they are not to be convinced by the experience of their forefathers, they richly deſerve to be left to be convinced by their own, and to inherit the wretched conſequences of ſuch baſe principles, were they only to be the ſufferers by them. But this prodigious ruin alike involves the innocent and the guilty; yea, the threatening danger affects not this nation only, but the whole Proteſtant intereſt throughout the world. Was this bulwark of the reformation once battered down, I ſee not, what human means are left to ſtop the torrent of Superſtition and tyranny. Ay, but ſome will tell you, ſuch is the

genius

genius of the people of this nation, that it can never be brought to ſubmit to Popery and arbitrary ſway: But what can be expected from the genius of a people unarmed, if, when armed it be too feeble to make an effectual reſiſtance.—He, that ſhall compare the genius of the Roman people, when tyranny firſt began to rear its head, and when that ſubtle, cruel tyrant Tiberius reigned, will find it as different from itſelf in thoſe two different, but not long diſtant periods of time, as a living warrior from a dead, mangled corpſe, or ghaſtly phantom; or as the genius of ancient from that of modern Rome. I cannot therefore but conclude, that the religious and civil rights and the boaſted genius of this people muſt needs expire together.

THUS are we bound by all the ties of duty and gratitude to God, of charity to ourſelves, families and lateſt poſterity, in pity to our bleeding country, and to our Proteſtant brethren throughout the world, earneſtly to contend for that faith, which was once delivered to the Saints. Let it not here be ſurmiſed, that I have been inculcating a retaliation of the ſame barbarities upon theſe perſecutors of the Church or

Chriſt, that they have exerciſed on other men. We have not ſo learned Chriſt. (Rom. 3, 8,) We know, that neither a good intention, nor the example of any man, or number of men, however good or great, and much leſs of cruel and ungodly men can legitimate an evil action.— Though we may be ſure, that they, who are ſuffered to live in peace and ſafety amongſt us, would not ſhew us the ſame indulgence, were power in their hands; yet perſecution for difference in religious ſentiments, we diſavow.— We make no converts by violence, nor chuſe to purge the world from Hereſy, nor the nation from their Superſtitions and Idolatries, much leſs to baniſh the truth of the Goſpel out of both, by blood. Be that the glory of the Romiſh inquiſition, which ſure was brought by ſome infernal fiend from Hell. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but ſpiritual.— Doctrines deſtructive of the public peace, (which it was not the deſign of Chriſtianity to diſturb,) and overt acts of treaſon, the genuine offspring of ſuch doctrines, we leave to the wiſdom of the Legiſlature, and the civil Magiſtrate to reſtrain.

ALL impious and immoral acts alſo, as having the ſame tendency, we own, are juſtly penal by the laws of men: But forcing conſciences by fire and faggot, we diſclaim, as inhuman, impious and abominable. Nor can we think it an act well-pleaſing to the God of mercy to maſſacre a ſingle perſon, much leſs whole nations, becauſe they cannot believe as we do. Yet neither can we think it criminal to take away the power from them, that would deſtroy. And this brings me to the laſt thing propoſed, viz. To point out the ways or methods, in which this faith is to be contended for.

THIRDLY.—And, firſt, we are to contend earneſtly for this faith, by ſuppreſſing, as far as in us lies, whatſoever is contrary thereto, whether in ourſelves or others, viz. all falſe doctrines, and all irreligious and immoral practices. Our enemies may be terrible, but our ſins are much more ſo. Look over the Hiſtories of former generations, and you will find, that no ſtate or kingdom ever was brought to deſolation, which might not truly ſay, that their own iniquities were the cauſe. This hath been the conſtant method of God's dealing with

all nations, but eſpecially with his own peculiar people. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth; therefore will I puniſh you for all your iniquities. When they broke his ſtatutes, and kept not his commandments, he viſited their offences with the rod, and their ſin with ſcourges; yea, he made them, that hated them, Lords over them." But when they repented them early and ſought after God, he ſoon made bare his arm in their deliverance, and gave them reſt from all their enemies round about. But if we walk not according to the light, whilſt we have the light, darkneſs will come upon us. If we will not ſeek the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs, that kingdom will be taken away from us, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.—Without repentance, therefore, and a thorough reformation we can never hope to avert the impending ſtorm.

But if we do repent, and turn unto the Lord, our God, he will return to us; he will give ſtrength unto his people; yea, the Lord will give his people the bleſſing of peace. Let us, therefore, repent and turn ourſelves from all our tranſgreſſions; ſo iniquity ſhall not be our ruin.

It is not enough, however, that ſuch, as ſet their hearts to ſeek the Lord in this time of public danger and diſtreſs, ſhould take care to turn away from the evil of their own doings: It is the duty of all, eſpecially of thoſe, in whom the power of coercion, by legal penalties, is lodged to diſcountenance and ſuppreſs, ſo far as in them lies, all open immorality and profaneneſs in others. But, I fear, we are too lukewarm in the cauſe and for the truth of God. Injuries done to ourſelves we reſent with too much warmth; but the diſhonour done to God gives us no offence. Otherwiſe, the epidemic profaneneſs and exceſs of this wicked age would be conſtrained, either through fear or ſhame, to conceal themſelves more, than now they do. When vice grows audacious and impudent, the zeal of a Phineas may be neceſſary to make the atonement. If we expect that God ſhould fight our battles and turn his hand againſt our enemies, we muſt ſhew more zeal in vindicating his honour and authority againſt his enemies, both for their good and our own.

Secondly. We are not only to repent and turn from all our ſins and tranſgreſſions, that God

God may be gracious and continue to us all his other mercies, and eſpecially that greateſt of them all, the Faith, that was once delivered to the Saints; but we are alſo to put up our moſt importunate prayers to him, that he would forgive us thoſe ſins, that have brought down the heavy judgments upon us; that we may be enabled by his grace to bring our purpoſes of amendment and reformation to good effect; that he would fruſtrate the malicious deſigns of all the enemies of his truth, and our peace; that he would inſpire union of hearts and hands into men of all orders amongſt us; wiſdom, vigilance, fidelity, true courage, a ſincere love of their country together with a holy zeal for his own honour into all thoſe that are to concert meaſures for the reſtoration of the public peace, or to put them in execution; and proſper all our juſt endeavours for the public welfare: "God is a very preſent help in time of trouble:" From him alone we muſt expect, and to him alone we muſt aſcribe our deliverance; and, therefore, we muſt aſk it of him, that we may obtain it, and when obtained, aſcribe it to him. This conduct is not only required in holy Scripture, but alſo ſuggeſted by the natural light of

our

our own minds. The people of God viſited him in their trouble, and poured out a prayer, when his chaſtening was upon them: Yea, the Heathen mariners cried every man to his God, when the ſtorm fell upon them. We are ſure that God will not long be angry with his people, that repenteth and prayeth. It is true he ſometimes ſuffers them to be brought into great diſtreſs, that his interpoſition in their deliverance may be the more evident; and they the more thankful to him; that they may be the more ſenſible of the evil conſequences of their ſins, and the more ſincerely penitent; that he may "humble them and prove them, whether they will truſt in him, even when he ſmiteth them; and that he may do them good in their latter end." But if his people will return and repent, and cry unto the Lord in their trouble; he will in his good time deliver them out of their diſtreſs. When Moſes held up his hand in prayer, Iſrael prevailed; but when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: How much more the united ſupplications of an humbled, penitent people? No ſooner had Hezekiah prayed againſt Sennacherib,

rib, but God ſent his Prophet to aſſure him, that he had heard his prayer: And that very night the Angel of the Lord went out and ſmote in the camp of the Aſſyrians a hundred and fourſcore and five thouſand. Theſe and ſuch like inſtances are upon record to teach us, that we ought always to pray, and not to faint; to convince us both of the neceſſity and efficacy of fervent prayer. If we thus wreſtle with God, we ſhall have power with him, and at the laſt prevail.

THIRDLY. We are not however to ſuppoſe, that the moſt importunate prayers of a penitent, returning people will ſuperſede the uſe of all natural and lawful means. We may, nay, we ought to repel force by force, and be as vigilant and politic as our enemies, at all times, but eſpecially, when not only foreign enemies invade, but unnatural rebels alſo riſe up in arms againſt their and our King and country, intent upon the extirpation of God's true religion, and the deprivation of us and our poſterity of every thing that is dear and valuable to us in this world. Elſe why did Job exhort the people of Iſrael to be of good courage, and to behave themſelves

themſelves valiantly for their people, and for the cities of their God? Or why did the Angel of the Lord ſay, "Curſe ye Meroz, curſe ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; becauſe they came not to the help of the Lord againſt the mighty." We are by God's appointment in all caſes to uſe the means he hath put into our power, in ſubordination to his providence.—He will not interpoſe in a miraculous manner in the deliverance of his people, until their diſtreſs and danger be worthy of ſuch his extraordinary interpoſition. It is a rule with the great maſters of poetry not to introduce a Deity, till the work, to be done by him, be worthy of him. A power to obtain is in effect the gift; which he, who neglects the uſe of the power, deſpiſes or rejects. He, who doth not prevent, to the utmoſt of his power, is an acceſſary to the ruin of his country. He, who doth not concur in giving all aſſiſtance in times of public diſtreſs, is a traitor to himſelf, his country, his King, and his God.

It is now time for me to draw to a concluſion; but here I muſt beg leave to caution you againſt two errors, but too often committed in

ſuch circumſtanes, which the experience of former ages hath found to be moſt fatal. It is a juſt remark of Sir John Temple, that "Our brethren of Ireland, diſtracted with the "tumultuous riſing of the Papiſts on all ſides "of them, by keeping ſingly apart, anxious "for their own private preſervation only, in- "ſtead of joining forces for the common ſafety, "gave the rebels a fair opportunity and a ſin- "gular advantage to work out with great faci- "lity their common deſtruction: Whereas if "they had left their houſes upon the firſt no- "tice of the riſing up of the Iriſh, and in the "ſeveral counties put themſelves into bodies "under the command of the chief Engliſh "gentlemen that were among them; how ill "ſoever they were provided for arms and am- "munition, they had undoubtedly been able to "have encountered the Iriſh, and to have beat "them out of ſeveral parts of the country, or "at leaſt to have put them to ſome ſtand in "their wicked enterpriſe." Another no leſs fatal error taken notice of by many Writers, is that of the inhabitants of Conſtantinople, who, when their country was invaded, and their city threatened with a ſiege, were ſo improvidently parſimonious,

parſimonious, though a ſmall part of their wealth would have been ſufficient for its defence, as to reſerve the whole to be the prey and plunder of the Turks and Infidels. Every wiſe man will chearfully give up a part of his ſubſtance to redeem the whole. When a whole country is oppreſſed, private perſons and particular towns fall of courſe. It is the wiſeſt conduct, therefore, for the particular members of any ſtate to expect to find their particular ſafety in that of the whole community. God forbid, that the people of this nation ſhould imitate the folly of the one or the avarice of the other of theſe examples: the conſequence might be the loſs of liberty, religion and life.

This brings me, laſtly, to obſerve, that there is one other way of contending for this faith once delivered to the Saints, not yet mentioned. The way I mean, is that of reſiſting unto blood, ſtriving againſt ſin. Thus the primitive Martyrs ſtrove, whoſe blood, watering the earth, brought forth Chriſtians in abundance. But as I earneſtly pray, ſo do I humbly hope, that the great God of truth and battles will not ſuffer his Vineyard to be laid waſte, will not thus lead

us into temptation, nor bring us to the fiery trial. I therefore only mention this in order to excite your unanimity and zeal in oppoſing the malicious deſigns of all, whether foreign enemies or inteſtine traitors, blood-thirſty, cruel and mercileſs, as they are.

I will now conclude the whole with that moving complaint and prayer of the Church of God in the 80th Pſalm, with the inſertion of one verſe only out of the 79th.

" TURN us again thou God of Hoſts, cauſe thy face to ſhine, and we ſhall be ſaved. Thou haſt brought a Vine out of Egypt, thou haſt caſt out the Heathen and planted it: Thou preparedſt room before it, and didſt cauſe it to take deep root, and it filled the land: The hills were covered with the ſhadow of it; and the boughs thereof were like the goodly Cedars. Why haſt thou then broken down her hedges, ſo that all they, that paſs by the way, do pluck off her grapes? The boar out of the wood doth waſte it, and the wild beaſts of the field devour it. Return, we beſeech thee, O God of Hoſts, look down from Heaven, behold and viſit

viſit this Vine, and the Vineyard, which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch, that thou madeſt ſtrong for thyſelf. We periſh at the rebuke of thy countenance. Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand, upon the ſon of man, whom thou madeſt ſtrong for thyſelf: ſo will we not go back from thee. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. "Help us, O God of our Salvation for the glory of thy name deliver us, and purge away our ſins for thy name's ſake." Turn us again, O Lord God of Hoſts, cauſe thy face to ſhine and we ſhall be ſaved.—Lord, hear thou the devout prayers of this thy diſtreſſed church and people; and we will ever bleſs thy name, ſaying, To thee the Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, the only wiſe, good, omnipotent, eternal God, be Glory, Adoration, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now, and henceforth for evermore.—*Amen.*

SERMON XII.

SERMON XII.

Rom. xiii. *Ver.* 1.—*Let every Soul be ſubject unto the higher Powers.*

MANY are the pernicious errors, that have been infuſed into the minds of the people of this land, in order to the ſubverſion of our happy conſtitution. From the very infancy of the Reformation, the Romiſh Miſſionaries have been ſowing your tares among the wheat, and uttering their falſe coin to the great detriment of this church and nation; yea, and ſome of theſe Wolves, in Sheep's Clothing, have been detected, legally convicted, and juſtly puniſhed. In matters of Religion, there is ſcarce one old Hereſy, that hath not been more than once revived and propagated with great zeal and induſtry, from that time down to theſe our days.—

And

And, hence, have proceeded our numerous Sects, Enthuſiaſts, Deiſts, Free-thinkers, and other names, which I forbear to mention. In matters of Policy too, there is a great variety of opinions, equally deſtructive of the public peace. Some, inſtead of being ſenſible of the excellency of our preſent conſtitution, and thankful for the many benefits, we do daily enjoy from it, are for a Republican form of government: Others, unmindful of paſt diſtreſs and danger, ſpurn at their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and ſeem deſirous to return to their former taſk-maſters. Others, if you will believe their words or actions, are for no form of religion or government at all. If we enquire into the cauſe of this diſtraction, it will be no difficult matter to trace it up to the ſame bitter fountain. Our inveterate and unwearied adverſaries find it an eaſy matter to make Proſelytes to their wildeſt opinions, by the perverſion of Reaſon and Scripture; and, therefore, they do and will perſevere in hopes of Lording it over us, at the laſt, by the diviſions they create amongſt us; well knowing, that they never can effectually deſtroy us, unleſs they can ſo far deceive us, as to make us the inſtruments of our own deſtruction.

If there be any juſt grounds for ſuch reflections as theſe, (and that there is, no one can doubt, that hath attentively peruſed the hiſtory of this nation for the two laſt centuries, judiciouſly obſerved the tranſactions of his own times, and can but perceive, what he daily hears and ſees;) then, ſurely, it is the duty of every ſincere Proteſtant, but eſpecially of thoſe, whom God hath appointed watchmen to the houſe of Iſrael, to give the alarm, and to defeat, as far as in them lies, all the attempts of the adverſary. And this I ſhall endeavour to do, by recommending that obedience to our civil governors, and eſpecially to the King, as ſupreme; which is moſt plainly enjoined in the text; which yet hath been wickedly perverted by ſome into a juſtification of diſobedience and rebellion.

But here it may be aſked, what occaſion there is for a diſcourſe on this ſubject at this time. Are not the arms of rebellion (by the bleſſing of God upon his Majeſty's care and vigilance, and the courage of the troops, conducted by his Royal Highneſs the Duke of Cumberland) ſubdued and broken? Yes; yet if

wearing

wearing badges of diſaffection in places of public concourſe; if joining intereſts with the avowed enemies of our religion and liberties, if rejoicing over the calamities of our country or the ill ſucceſs that ſometimes have attended his Majeſty's deſigns for the public good, and aggravating them beyond the truth; if ſighing at the public ſucceſſes, and repreſenting them as of little conſequence; if imputing neceſſary ſeverity and juſt puniſhment to butchery and barbarity, and undeſerved clemency to fear; if theſe (and other ſymptoms over which I chuſe to caſt a veil) be rational grounds of concluſion, then, I hope, I may be permitted to conclude, that the ſpirit of diſaffection and rebellion is not entirely broken or ſubdued, and to flatter myſelf, that an attempt to contribute to the extinction of that malignant ſpirit, that hath more than once brought this nation to the brink of ruin, which could hardly be thought impertinent or unneceſſary in any time or place, will not on this occaſion be cenſured but approved.

WITHOUT further apology, therefore, I ſhall now proceed to examine, with the utmoſt caution, and I hope without prejudice, the words of

the Text, that I may extract the true ſenſe of the Apoſtle out of them: And to this end it will be neceſſary to conſider them, as they ſtand in connexion with the context, ſo far as it is relative to the ſame ſubject. Theſe things being premiſed, I obſerve, that the words, "Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers," ſuggeſt to us three proper ſubjects for our preſent enquiry,

FIRRT—Who they are that are required to be ſubject.

SECONDLY—To whom this ſubjection is due. And, laſtly, The nature and meaſures of the duty itſelf.

FIRST.—I begin with the firſt, who they are that are required to be ſubject. Every ſoul (i. e.) every member of the ſtate or community, that hath a ſuperior, of whatſoever age, ſex, vocation or quality. This precept, ſaith Chryſoſtom, is given to all, Clergy as well as Laity, to Prieſts and Monks, and I may truly add to Biſhops and Archbiſhops too, and not to ſecular perſons only. As under the Jewiſh Diſpenſation Prophets and Prieſts, yea, the High Prieſt himſelf, when

when that ſtate was under the government of Kings, were ſubject to royal juriſdiction: So now the clergy, of whatſoever denomination they be, are as ſtrictly bound to be ſubject to the higher powers, as the laity can be. For the Goſpel hath made no alteration in the forms of civil government; but left the ſeveral nations of the world to their own conſtitutions, and confirmed the authority of the civil magiſtrate in every ſtate, of whatever kind it be. How then ſhall we account for that exemption from the juriſdiction of the civil magiſtrate, which the Pope arrogates to himſelf, not only in his own behalf, but in the behalf of all the clergy, that hold communion with him? Whence hath the holy Father derived the authority he aſſumes to himſelf, to abſolve ſubjects from their oaths and allegiance to their lawful Princes and Governors, by this means ſetting up two independent and, not ſeldom, oppoſite juriſdictions within one and the ſame ſtate, to the manifeſt obſtruction of public juſtice and diſturbance of the public peace? Whence hath he derived the power of depoſing Princes and giving their crowns to whomſoever he pleaſes, as King of Kings and Monarch ſupreme? Our Saviour

expreſſly declared, that his kingdom was not of this world. How vain then is that aſſertion of the Pope, that he, as Vicar of Chriſt, is ſuperior to all and accountable to none; but that all Chriſtians, ſubjects or princes, are ſubject and accountable to him? Is not this to exalt himſelf above all that is called God, except the moſt high God only? He boaſts himſelf as St. Peter's ſucceſſor; but ſeems to be a ſtranger both to the ſpirit and precept of that Apoſtle, who hath commanded us to ſubmit ourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake, whether it be to the King as ſupreme, or unto Governors, as unto them that are ſent by him for the puniſhment of evil doers, (no matter whether clergy or laity) and for the praiſe of them that do well. For ſurely our bleſſed Saviour never intended, that they who were to preach the neceſſity of obedience to civil magiſtrates, ſhould be exempted from their juriſdiction, diſobey them, and tranſgreſs their laws with impunity.

SECONDLY.—Our next enquiry is, who they are to whom ſubjection is due. Now, though the Apoſtle ſpeaks of powers or authorities in the

the abſtract; yet doubtleſs he muſt be ſuppoſed to mean perſons in power or authority. For authority without a perſon veſted with it can neither puniſh nor reward, be an encourager of good, nor a terror to evil works. It muſt therefore be allowed, that the Apoſtle intends to require ſubjection to perſons in authority. And therefore, though he ſpeaks of powers or authorities in the abſtract in the firſt verſe, yet he afterwards ſpeaks of rulers and miniſters in the 3d and 4th alſo. And the only reaſon, I can aſſign for his uſe of the abſtract term in the 1ſt verſe is, that he meant to enjoin ſubjection to all perſons in authority, of whatſoever denomination they be.

But here it is poſitively affirmed by ſome writers, that by the higher powers, the higheſt only are to be underſtood; and the following reaſons are offered in maintenance of this interpretation, firſt, becauſe the ſame original word is immediately ſubjoined to the King. Pet. i. v. 2 and 13; and conſequently muſt there ſignify ſupreme. Secondly, becauſe all ſupreme magiſtrates have their commiſſion immediately from God; but all ſubordinate magiſtrates theirs, not immediately

immediately from God, but from the ſupreme: and thirdly, from the nature of the word, which confines it to thoſe, that are over, not under, others. But none of theſe arguments do ſupport this interpretation; ὑπερέχω and its derivatives are words of general ſignification, and, therefore, their particular import is to be determined by the ſubject of which they are predicated. Thus when St. Peter ſays, ſubmit yourſelves to every ordinance of man, for the Lord's ſake; whether it be to the King, ὡς ὑπερέχοντι, it is rightly tranſlated, as ſupreme; becauſe Kings have ſeldom any ſuperiors. But when St. Paul, who ſurely knew the meaning of his own words, requires prayers to be made for Kings, and for all that are ἐν ὑπεροχῇ, It is moſt rational to interpret the words, as our tranſlators have done, that is, as comprehending all that are in authority, of which there are many degrees. The Centurian was a man under authority; yet had ſoldiers under him. Although, therefore, it be ſaid, that the nature of the words confines them to thoſe that are above and not under others; yet it ſhould be remembered, that the ſame perſon may be inferior to one, and ſuperior to another. When, therefore, this word is applied to powers

in

in general, there is no neceſſity ariſing either from the nature of the word itſelf or of that to which it is joined, to underſtand it as limited to the higheſt power only. But here it is further objected, that the Apoſtle ſpeaks of ſuch powers, as are the ordinance of God; that is, the ſupreme; for the ſupreme Magiſtrate hath his commiſſion immediately from God, but the ſubordinate, not immediately from God, but from the ſupreme: Yet Pilate had his power from above, as well as Tiberius. And, therefore, there are other powers that are the ordinance of God, beſides the Imperial or the Regal: and this a learned Commentator allows; for in that exhortation of St. Paul to Timothy, inſtead of Kings and all that are in authority, he ſubſtitutes Emperors and Rulers of provinces under them. But it cannot be truly ſaid, except of ſome few Kings of Iſrael and Judah, that they had their commiſſion immediately from God. Claudius or Nero is ſuppoſed to have been Emperor, when this Epiſtle was written; but did theſe and all their predeceſſors receive their commiſſions immediately from God?

If we look into the hiſtory of thoſe times, we ſhall find ſecond cauſes, immediately concurring to their advancement to the imperial dignity. Force of arms and uſurpation, bribed ſenators and ſeditious ſoldiers, the intrigues of a Livia or Agrippina, who, like a true ſtepmother, poiſoned her huſband, that ſhe might exclude his ſon, and make way for her own:— Theſe and ſuch like were the means, by which many aſcended the imperial throne; and ſhall we ſay, that all theſe had their commiſſion immediately from God? Then by the way what becomes of the doctrine of indefeaſible, hereditary right? If ſuch powers as theſe are to be obeyed under the penalty of eternal damnation, I know not how they, that interpret this text, ſo as to condemn the revolution, and thereby promote diſaffection and rebellion, can be made conſiſtent with themſelves. But poſſibly though government and authority be the ordinance of God; yet particular forms of government and particular governors too may be, what St. Peter calls both kings and governors, that is, the ordinance of man.

In kingdoms elective by whom are the ſupreme governors, as governors, made? In kingdoms hereditary, election will be found in the firſt advancement, and alſo in kingdoms originally by conqueſt; unleſs you can ſuppoſe a general to conquer without an army, or to be a general without being choſen. But St. Paul hath declared, that the powers that be, are ordained of God, and that he, that reſiſteth the power, reſiſteth the ordinance of God: By powers, doubtleſs, perſons in power muſt be meant; and then they will be both the ordinance of God and the ordinance of man; but it cannot be truly ſaid of ſupreme magiſtrates univerſally, that they are the ordinance of God in any other ſenſe, than that in which it is common to all, that are in authority. As, therefore, no man can ſay that the ſubordinate magiſtrate hath no ſhare of power delegated to him, he ought to be obeyed according to the extent of his authority, as well as the ſupreme. But let us ſuppoſe the ſupreme magiſtrate to have his authority immediately from God, and the ſubordinate immediately or mediately from him, will not the conſequence be, that he, who reſiſteth the ſubordinate magiſtrate in ſo doing, reſiſteth the

ſupreme, whoſe miniſter he is, and conſequently reſiſteth the ordinance of God? I do humbly conceive, therefore, that there is no reaſon to limit St. Paul's words to ſupreme magiſtrates only, merely on this account, that they have their commiſſion immediately from God, and that our tranſlators carried the Apoſtle's meaning high enough, when they ſaid, "Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher (not higheſt) Powers." For if he had intended to require ſubjection to the Emperor only, he would have ſpoken in the ſingular number, and probably have added ſome more illuſtrious epithet to that ſupereminent power and dignity. But we need not longer inſiſt on this point; for St. Peter hath in the very ſame word enjoined ſubjection, and that for the Lord's ſake, to governors ſent by the king, as well as to the king himſelf, and by parity of reaſon to all ſubordinate magiſtrates, ſent by him. And thus the reſult of theſe two enquiries will be clearly this, that ſubjection is due from all under authority to all in authority. And this leads me to the

THIRD, and laſt enquiry, into the nature and extent or meaſures of the duty here enjoined. Now,

Now, ſubjection is the doing, what our ſuperior commands; the forbearing to do, what he forbids; and ſuffering with patience the burdens, puniſhments, or corrections, he may lawfully lay upon us. And if God be the Power, to whom our ſubjection is due, this duty implies all theſe things abſolutely and without limitation; but the ſame cannot truly be ſaid with reſpect to any other ſuperior. If the ſupreme magiſtrate commands us to do, what God hath forbidden, we are obliged not to do it; if not to do, what God hath commanded, yet we muſt do it; becauſe we muſt hearken to God rather than man. An unlimited, active obedience, therefore is not due to any man.—But here the controverſy commences.

In all caſes, ſay authors, not a few, where you cannot actively obey for the reaſons juſt mentioned, or where the commands or actions of the ſupreme magiſtrate are lawleſs, evil and injurious, you muſt patiently ſuffer the moſt cruel, unjuſt and barbarous perſecutions: Neither private perſons, nor public communities have any other lawful means of redreſs left, but prayers and tears; and if theſe prevail not, they

muſt ſubmit to be carried, like the lamb to the ſlaughter, and like the ſheep before her ſhearers, be dumb. But this Doctrine, it ſeems, would not have gone down ſo glibly, if ſuch an abſolute, paſſive obedience had been affirmed to be due to the ſubordinate as to the ſupreme power, and this may ſuggeſt to us the reaſon, wherefore St. Paul's words have been reſtrained by ſome writers to the higheſt power only. Let us, however, have the patience to hear this Doctrine a little more at large, and let one of theſe paſſive Doctors ſpeak the ſenſe of all the reſt:—" This duty of ſubjection to our ſupe-
" riors (Princes alone he means, as you will
" perceive by the ſequel) implies our meek and
" patient ſubmiſſion to the penalties of their
" laws, when upon a full perſuaſion of the un-
" lawfulneſs of them we cannot comply with
" them. We muſt obey God rather than man.
" But at the ſame time, that our allegiance to
" the Throne of Heaven obliges us to refuſe
" active obedience to our temporal Princes, it
" indiſpenſibly obliges us to render paſſive, and
" not to uſe any violence againſt him, though
" it be in the defence of our eſtates or liberties,
" or lives, or which ought to be dearer to us

than

" than all other things, our Religion. Sove-
" reign Princes are in their ſeveral dominions
" next to and immediately under God, and
" therefore having no authority but his above
" them, they are accountable only to his Tri-
" bunal. Unleſs, therefore, we will render
" ourſelves guilty of the higheſt affront to the
" Divine Majeſty, we have no other remedy,
" whenever we are reduced to that extremity,
" that we cannot obey our Prince without diſ-
" obeying God; but to diſcharge our duty cou-
" rageouſly and faithfully to God, and meekly
" and quietly to ſubmit to the unjuſt perſecu-
" tions of our Prince. And though this may
" ſeem a hard chapter to thoſe, who conſider
" only one ſide of the caſe; yet there is nothing
" more apparent, than that the liberty of reſiſt-
" ing Princes would prove a far greater miſ-
" chief to the world, than all the cruelties and
" oppreſſions of the moſt barbarous tyrants.—
" For had God left us at liberty to reſiſt when
" oppreſſed, the conſequence muſt have been
" an eternal ſtate of war, in which, inſtead of
" ſuffering the oppreſſions of one tyrant, we
" ſhould every one turn tyrant to another. To
" this it is added, that by the higher powers we

" are

" are not to underſtand the laws and conſtitu-
" tions; but the perſons of ſovereign Princes;
" this Epiſtle having been written under Clau-
" dius or Nero, whoſe wills were the only
" laws they were governed by, and yet theſe
" were the higher powers to whom the Apoſtle
" requires our ſubjection;" that is, ſuch ſub-
jection as he had deſcribed.

As to offering violence to the perſon of a King, theſe are words of an odious and invidious ſound, and ſlily inſerted the better to introduce the doctrine of abſolute paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance. But upon the ſuppoſition, that a Sovereign Prince may uſe violence, in his own perſon, to oppreſs and perſecute, with the greateſt injuſtice and cruelty, I can ſee nothing of injuſtice in the uſe of ſuch means, as are abſolutely neceſſary to reſtrain the violence, cruelty and injuſtice made uſe of by him. To ſay no more upon ſo tender a point, the doctrine contained in the foregoing quotation, which, like the arguments offered in ſupport of it, is neither founded in reaſon, ſcripture nor experience; is this, that ſubjects, whether the government, under which they live, be abſolute or limited,

muſt

muſt be paſſive and not reſiſt the ſupreme magiſtrate, though it be in the neceſſary defence of their eſtates, liberties, lives or religion, and though he be an unjuſt, cruel, oppreſſive and perſecuting tyrant. And why did not this author proceed one ſtep farther, and require the ſame ſubjection to every ſubordinate magiſtrate or officer, commiſſioned by him? For our duty to both is enjoined by St. Peter in one and the ſame word, which is alſo the ſame with that uſed by St. Paul. It is no dfficult matter to gueſs the reaſon. If we examine this doctrine by the common ſentiments of mankind, it will not bear the teſt.

THE greateſt and wiſeſt nations and the beſt of men in all ages have accounted it not only lawful for an oppreſſed people to do themſelves juſtice, but a duty, which they owed to themſelves and their poſterity. The principal inſtruments of thoſe revolutions, by which a nation in ſuch diſtreſs, hath regained its liberty and laws, have always been looked upon as extraordinary perſons, raiſed up by the providence of God for the redemption of mankind from miſery and ſlavery; and as they were accordingly honoured,

honoured, whilſt they lived, ſo their memories have been held in great eſteem by all poſterity. But this doctrine brands theſe glorious aſſerters of the natural rights of mankind, with the infamous names of Traitors and Rebels, and hath aſſigned them a place amongſt the moſt wretched of the damned in Hell. Did our bleſſed Saviour declare, that his kingdom was not of this world; and yet St. Paul preached a doctrine plainly calculated to make all governors tyrants, and all ſubjects ſlaves, under pain of damnation? Was there no way to wipe off the ſcandal, unjuſtly caſt upon the primitive Chriſtians, as rejecting all civil authority; but by eſtabliſhing tyranny by ſuch a dreadful ſanction? But thus do ſome, not over wiſe, with a too forward zeal, avoiding one extreme, incautiouſly run into another. Such a doctrine would have been a much greater ſtumbling block to the Romans, than the contrary; for they had other laws, beſides the ſole will of the Prince, to be governed by, and had not yet ſo learned ſlavery.

ALLEGIANCE plainly points out its own meaſure, viz. The laws of God and the State. It doth not ſo obey the laws of man, as thereby

thereby to diſobey the laws of God. It doth not aſſert liberty by running into rebellion, nor on the contrary does it exact ſuch an unlimited, paſſive obedience, as in effect gives up the natural and legal rights of all mankind. The good ſubject will pay an active obedience, ſo far as the laws of God and of the land permit; nor will he reſiſt, though legal redreſs cannot be had, until the remedy be not ſo bad as the diſeaſe.

The very ends of government muſt be defeated, and the mutual compact, ſuppoſed to exiſt in all free ſtates between the prince and people, be ſo violated, that the welfare of the whole community is evidently ſtruck at, and then any people would be condemned by the great law of ſelf-preſervation, if they did not reſiſt ſo far as was neceſſary to bind the hands of tyranny and oppreſſion. And theſe, I dare ſay, are the moſt extenſive meaſures of ſubmiſſion to our civil governors, that the Goſpel requires. To teach otherwiſe, is to aſſert, that it is expedient, a whole nation ſhould periſh by the weakneſs or wickedneſs of one man, rather than he ſhould be diveſted of a power of doing miſchief; it is to charge God with the abſurdity of hav-

ing impoſed two different laws upon mankind, that of an abſolute, paſſive obedience, and the univerſal law of ſelf-preſervation, both which in conjunctures, that have happened, it would have been impoſſible to obſerve; it is to blaſt the laws of all nations at a breath; to remove all the fences and ſecurities they have, not only for their properties, but alſo their liberty and lives; and to proſtrate them all at the feet of a ſingle perſon; it is to annihilate the beſt formed conſtitutions in a moment, which it has been the work of ages to bring to maturity; for if ſubjects, though univerſally oppreſſed, may not make uſe of other defence, than prayers and tears, which have been found by experience to make but little impreſſion upon the hearts of tyrants; then there can be no law but the will of the oppreſſor, he that may be reſiſted in nothing, may do every thing he pleaſes. And then how ſhall we impeach the wiſdom of the legiſlators of this and former ages, in making laws to no purpoſe; nay, rather, what guilt ſhall we not involve them in for having made laws to reſtrain the regal power, which ought not to be reſtrained?

KING James the Firſt made no ſcruple to aſſiſt the Hollanders in throwing off the Spaniſh yoke. He called his clergy together indeed, to give their judgment, how far a Chriſtian and Proteſtant King might concur to aſſiſt his neighbours in ſhaking off their obedience to their Sovereign on account of oppreſſion; but at the ſame time he told them, that Queen Elizabeth and the whole kingdom had been very free in aſſiſting that people, both with advice and arms; that they were the firſt, that had ſcruples about the matter, and that he called them together, not ſo much to ſatisfy himſelf, as the world about him, of the juſtice of his owning the Hollanders at that time: that whatever averſion they profeſſed againſt God's being the author of ſin, they had ſtumbled upon the threſhold of that opinion, in ſaying upon the matter, that even tyranny was God's authority, and ſhould be revered as ſuch; whereas (as he rightly obſerved in a ſpeech to the parliament) a King leaves to be a King, and degenerates into a tyrant, as ſoon as he leaves of to govern by law. Charles the Firſt acted the ſame part with reſpect to the people of Rochel, and aſſigned the ſame reaſons for his conduct.

Will the advocates for paſſive obedience be content to have the merits of that reſiſtance, which brought about the happy revolution, tried upon theſe principles, or they will involve in the guilt of rebellion, that renowned Queen and thoſe two Kings, her ſucceſſors, as having been aiding and aſſiſting to an injured and oppreſſed people, who, upon their doctrine, muſt be condemned as rebels. In ſhort, no King can have any authority beyond the laws of that kingdom, over which he is appointed to rule; for on thoſe laws his right of dominion is founded. Where, therefore, any people hath not conferred an abſolute power, but a government according to law, they muſt be ſuppoſed, ſaith Grotius, to have reſerved to themſelves a power to preſerve their laws and conſtitution, And accordingly, I think, there cannot be an inſtance produced, where whole nations, when oppreſſed, have failed to attempt their own deliverance, if there was a probability, or ſo much as a poſſibility, of ſucceſs.

It is ſaid in our law, that the King's power is of right, and not of wrong; that as he is the author of right, there ought not to ariſe occaſion

ſion of injury, from whence right proceeds; that protection draws ſubjection; and ſubjection protection. But theſe maxims are mere ſounds without ſignification, upon a ſuppoſition of the truth of the doctrine above mentioned, which is plainly inconſiſtent with the laws of this or any other nation, where there is any other law, beſide the ſole will of the Prince, and the people have any rights more, than mere ſlaves. And, therefore, as all the revelations, that ever God made of his will, are evidently deſigned not to deſtroy, but advance the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind, it muſt be a reaſonable preſumption, that there is no ſuch doctrine in the holy Scriptures.

But here it is replied, that no arguments from reaſon, the general ſenſe of mankind, or any human authority, can be of any force againſt a poſitive, divine command, delivered by an inſpired Apoſtle. To this I anſwer, that the Apoſtle has enjoined ſubjection to the higher powers; but not the ſubjection they contend for, nor to ſuch powers as they deſcribe. Ὑποταγὴ is a word of great latitude, and imports not only the duty of ſubjects to magiſtrates or governors, but

but alſo that of wives to their huſbands, or children to their parents, of ſervants to their maſters, of inferiors to ſuperiors in general, and ſometimes it ſignifies no more, than that mutual deference and condeſcenſion between equals, which good manners and brotherly love require. Now it is admitted, that this word cannot imply an abſolute, paſſive obedience, when it is applied to any relation inferior to that between King and Subject, and why it ſhould imply ſo much in this particular precept, let our opponent aſſign the reaſon.

It is true the greateſt ſubmiſſion is due to the higheſt power. A more extenſive obedience is due to the political, than the natural parent; to the ſupreme magiſtrate, than the ſubordinate; yet ſure there is room enough for ſuch a ſuperior obedience to the higheſt power on earth, without exacting an unlimited, paſſive obedience to tyrants and oppreſſors. Wives are required to be ſubject to their huſbands in every thing, even as the church is unto Chriſt. Suppoſe then a huſband in a fit of drunkenneſs or paſſion ſhould attempt to take away the life of his

his wife by violence, may ſhe not reſiſt, if it be in her power, ſo far as is neceſſary to the preſervation of her own life? You may, if you pleaſe, ſubſtitute child and parent, ſervant and maſter, inſtead of the former relatives, and the ſame conceſſion muſt be made. The great law of ſelf-preſervation will juſtify them in repelling violence by violence, if they cannot otherwiſe provide for their own ſafety. Why may not then the political child the whole body of the people, in like manner defend their political life, that is, their conſtitution, againſt the avowed attempts of the political parent to deſtroy it? In all theſe caſes, though no limitation be expreſſed; yet it is implied in the nature of the thing. But here it is found in the very words themſelves; for the words importing ſubjection and reſiſtance are contraries, and do ſignify the one a ſubjection according to what is ordained, and the other a reſiſtance contrary to law or ordinance. There is, therefore, a ſubjection, that doth not imply an abſolute, paſſive obedience and non-reſiſtance to cruelty, injuſtice and oppreſſion; and there is a reſiſtance of lawleſs power, which is not rebellion; nor that reſiſtance, againſt which St. Paul hath denounced

denounced damnation. To this it may be added, that the uſe of words is to convey ideas, and therefore they cannot convey ideas, that never entered into the minds of thoſe, who uſe them,

But I have great reaſon to believe, that the Greeks were utter ſtrangers to this ſlaviſh doctrine; and therefore the Greek word before mentioned can have no ſuch meaning; and if any man will produce one paſſage out of any Greek author, that lived before, or was cotemporary with the Apoſtle, where it muſt neceſſarily have the ſignification contended for, then will I give up the cauſe. Let every ſoul be ſubordinate, ſaith Piſcator, in its own place and order: This muſt refer us to laws and conſtitutions. It muſt, therefore, firſt be proved, that the laws of God or man have given authority to the higher powers to oppreſs, perſecute and deſtroy the innocent, as well as the nocent, and not only private perſons, but whole communities, or an unlimited non-reſiſtance to tyrants and oppreſſors, will be no conſequence of what the Apoſtle hath ſaid in this place. For God hath given to no man a licence to ſin. And is not unjuſt

unjuſt oppreſſion or cruel perſecution a ſin in the higheſt power on earth? Hear what the Royal Prophet hath ſaid: "The ſpirit of the Lord ſpake by me, and his word was in my mouth, he that ruleth over men muſt be juſt, ruling in the fear of God." It is a ſaying of Socrates, mentioned by Xenophon, a King is choſen not ſo much, that he may take good care of himſelf, as that they who chuſe him, may be made happy through him. No Governor, therefore, can pretend a right to injure his ſubjects, nor to their ſubmiſſion to ſuch injuries; but eſpecially not he, that hath received but a limited authority, or hath conſented to a reſtriction of his authority, and enacted the ſame into a law. And hence it will follow, that as a ſon, who is to obey his father in all things, may yet reſiſt him in his own neceſſary defence: So may the ſupreme magiſtrate, though he is to be obeyed by all, in like manner, be reſiſted by all, when his actions manifeſtly tend to the deſtruction of the happineſs of his people. But why do theſe Writers put a caſe, that the Apoſtle has not put? He has required ſubjection to the higher powers; but theſe are ſuch as are a terror, not to good works, but to evil;

as are miniſters of God to us for good, ſuch under whom we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty. St. Peter hath enjoined the ſame ſubjection to the King and to Governors ſent by him, for the puniſhment of evil doers, and for the praiſe of them, that do well. To theſe we are to pay tribute, and be ſubject not only for wrath, but alſo for conſcience ſake. Here is not a word ſaid by either of the Apoſtles of oppreſſors and perſecuting tyrants. Are theſe the miniſters of God for good? Are they a terror to evil works only? Are not the beſt of their ſubjects uſually the firſt objects of their rage and jealouſy? Is it under ſuch governors, that we may hope to live quiet and peaceable lives in all Godlineſs and Honeſty? And are we to pay them tribute, that we may be unjuſtly perſecuted and oppreſſed? I leave it to our opponents to give the anſwer. But Nero, ſay they, was Emperor when this Epiſtle was written; but then it is by no means evident, that his tyranny yet began to diſcover itſelf. Hiſtorians tells us, that he ſet out with oſtentation of piety; declared he would govern after the pattern preſcribed by Auguſtus; that he omitted no opportunity of ſhewing himſelf

liberal

liberal, merciful, affable and obliging; concealed his vices to the fourth year of his reign at leaſt, which muſt be after the date of this Epiſtle; St. Paul, therefore, had no reaſon to conſider him under the character of a tyrant: And it is not improbable, had Nero himſelf been told at that time, what evil he ſhould afterwards do, he would have made the ſame reply that Hazael did to Eliſha, "What is thy ſervant, a dog, that he ſhould do this great thing?" This obſervation added to what was ſaid before, amounts to a reaſonable conviction, that the Apoſtle had not the caſe of tyranny in his thoughts, and that tyrants cannot expect, that God ſhould ſo far patroniſe their evil deeds, as to ſentence ſuch, as do reſiſt them in their own neceſſary defence, to eternal damnation.

NEITHER can it be reaſonably inferred from the obedience, required to juſt and good governors, that the ſame is due to tyrants and oppreſſors. And therefore, I think, it may be juſtly concluded from what hath been ſaid, that the Goſpel of Chriſt is no friend to tyranny, nor enemy to the liberties of mankind. But this is not a point to be given up by thoſe, that

condemn the principles, upon which the late happy Revolution was founded, in order to make way for another. And, therefore, they further argue, Are not the powers that be the ordinance of God? And who can reſiſt the ordinance of God and be guiltleſs? We grant the queſtion, mankind could not ſubſiſt without ſociety, nor ſociety without government; and, therefore, it is the will of God, that there ſhould be governors, and that they ſhould be obeyed. I will alſo grant, that even tyrants do not ſtep into power without his permiſſive providence at leaſt. But ſhall we then call them the ordinance of God and his vicegerents, when they act contrary to their commiſſion, and the end of their appointment? When, inſtead of protecting the innocent, diſtributing equal juſtice, diſcountenancing vice, encouraging truth and virtue, and promoting the welfare of their people, they oppreſs the innocent; pervert juſtice; are a terror to good works and not to evil; and ſacrifice the public peace and happineſs to their own bigotry or ambition; when they do that which God hath forbidden (and for which, without a timely repentance, they ſhall be ſure to be the objects of his ſevereſt vengeance,

vengeance, in that day when the mighty men, that have not judged aright, nor kept the law, nor walked after the counſel of God, ſhall be mightily tormented) to call ſuch as theſe, God's vicegerents, methinks would be little leſs than blaſphemy. But doth not God ſometimes give a King in his wrath? And are not tyrants ſent as judgments upon a wicked people for the puniſhment of their ſins and the reformation of their evil manners? and are not divine judgments to be received with an abſolute ſubmiſſion? To this we anſwer by another queſtion: Are not Plagues and peſtilences, judgments too? Yet, ſurely, beſides our prayers, and tears and repentance, we may lawfully uſe all proper means in our power, in order to prevent the ſpreading of the infection. But we are told, that no ſuch caſes of extreme neceſſity can be ſuppoſed. Have we never read of an Indian Emperor's ordering one half of his army to lay down their arms, that the other might murder them in cold blood, without reſiſtance? Or did we never read of one Roman Emperor's marking out the beſt of his ſubjects, one by one, for the ſlaughter? Of another's wiſhing, that the people of Rome had but one neck, that he might cut it off at one ſtroke? BUT

But theſe, it ſeems, are things, that were tranſacted in times and places far removed from us. Let us then look back to times, within the memory of many that are yet alive. Have we not then both heard and read of a King of this iſland, which boaſts its excellent laws and conſtitution, levying cuſtoms contrary to the law; diſpenſing with and ſuſpending of laws, and the execution of them, without conſent of Parliament, ſetting up his ſole will above the laws, and reſolved to act *en Maitre*, erecting a court of inquiſition under the name of an Eccleſiaſtical Commiſſion, impriſoning no leſs than ſeven Biſhops at a time, for preſenting an humble petition, to be excuſed from doing that, which by law they ought not to do, diveſting the Fellows of a College of their freeholds for not ſubmitting to his pleaſure, in manifeſt violation, of their oaths and ſtatutes, and introducing a ſeminary of Jeſuits and Popiſh Prieſts into their places; ſending a ſolemn embaſſy to reconcile theſe apoſtate nations to the Holy See, deſtroying charters, diſplacing officers, civil and military, and ſubſtituting in their ſtead known Papiſts, deſervedly made incapable by the eſtabliſhed laws of this land, keeping up a ſtanding

army

army in time of peace without conſent of Parliament, the better to enforce his ſuperſtitious and arbitrary ſchemes, reſolved to bind in chains the necks and conſciences of his ſubjects, ſole arbiter of their temporal and eternal welfare, or rather determined, ſo far as in him lay, to ruin both. Strange advances for little more than a triennial reign! See here a caſe of extreme neceſſity, which, ſome ſay, cannot be ſuppoſed, ſufficient to juſtify that reſiſtance, without which our civil and religious rights could never have been tranſmitted down to us.

To ſtop the mouths of theſe gainſayers, I have as large a conceſſion to make them, as they can poſſibly deſire. Let us then ſuppoſe for a moment, this Epiſtle to bear date in the tenth year of Nero's reign, after his perſecution of the Chriſtians began, and his inceſt, parricide and tyranny, were notorious to the whole empire, that St. Paul was not ignorant by what methods he had been advanced to the Imperial Dignity to the excluſion of Britannicus, the late Emperor's legitimate ſon, whom he had murdered to ſecure his uſurpation; that in theſe circumſtances the Apoſtle did enjoin all Chriſtians

tians to yield an abſolute, paſſive obedience to this uſurper, tyrant, and monſter of a man.— And ſhall it not then be our duty, under the ſame penalty, to yield the ſame obedience to our moſt gracious Sovereign? A King lawfully, peaceably and honourably ſeated in the throne of his anceſtors; great, good and juſt, and merciful and faithful to all his engagements; brave in the field, wiſe in council, ſteady and unwearied in the proſecution of the public good; the darling of the beſt and by far the greateſt part of his ſubjects; a Prince, who thinks it his glory to be the Monarch of a free-born people, whom the moſt diſloyal cannot juſtly charge with one injurious act, or one attempt to extend prerogative; whoſe deſire it is to reign in the hearts of his ſubjects, ever anxious to maintain the honour of the nation, and to preſerve all our national, civil and religious rights, both againſt foreign and domeſtic invaders; to whom, next under God, we owe our late happy deliverance from the rapine and murders of heady and high-minded Traitors, and from that univerſal ruin, that threatened not only his Majeſty's own dominions, but the whole Proteſtant intereſt throughout the whole world;

world; a Prince, whoſe character I can, without the ſpirit of propheſy, foreſee, will ſhine as bright in the Britiſh annals as that of any that have been before him, or poſſibly may come after him. To ſuch princes our higheſt obedience and loweſt ſubmiſſion, our warmeſt affection and ſincereſt gratitude are due, as being the greateſt bleſſings of ſociety, and to reſiſt them is to rebel indeed, a ſin without repentance the moſt unpardonable upon all the principles of reaſon and ſcripture; yea, even upon the principles of theſe ſtrenuous advocates for the vaſſalage of almoſt the whole race of minkind. So little reaſon is there to honour ſome with the title of Martyrs, who are in reality the moſt criminal of all malefactors, and whoſe demerit no puniſhment allowed of by the laws of this land can exceed.

THUS have I laboured through the laſt enquiry, notwithſtanding all the rubbiſh, that hath been thrown in my way; and ſhall now give you the whole ſenſe of the Apoſtle's precept in very few words. Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers, that is, let all that are under authority, be ſubject to all that

are in authority, according to the degree of authority veſted in them, doing or ſuffering in obedience to the commands of their ſuperiors, as the laws of God and of the government, under which they live, do require. And further than this, I ſhall not take upon me to extend the precept; but leave others to their own judgment in this matter, wiſhing them to ſeek for the truth without prejudice, and for its own ſake only.

And now it is high time to conclude; but there is another tenet, which if it holds good, will effectually undo all that has been done, and that is, an indefeaſible hereditary right in the firſt-born ſon of a King to the crown of his anceſtors. If this be the caſe, then, for any thing I can ſee, liberty is neither lawfully to be acquired, nor when acquired, preſerved. But what do conſequences ſignify againſt an indefeaſible claim of right? And whence doth this right ariſe? Not from an ordinance of God, recorded in Holy Scripture; for then it would have been long ſince produced: If it be indefeaſible, how ſhall David's appointing Solomon his ſucceſſor, in manifeſt violation of his elder brother's

brother's right, be accounted for, or how came William Rufus to ſucceed the conqueror to the excluſion of his elder brother? Or why in elective kingdoms do they often pay ſo very little regard to the ſons of their deceaſed Kings? Sure this is but a novel plea; and this right muſt be founded on an ordinance of man, and be the creature of the law. But what the law hath created it may annihilate. And whether the laws of this land have effectually annihilated the claim of a Popiſh Pretender to the Imperial Crown of theſe kingdoms, I leave the doubtful to be determined by more competent judges.

Are we not yet convinced that darkneſs and light, Popery in power and Proteſtantiſm in ſubjection, cannot dwell together? Are Smithfield fires become but a mere fable now? If it ſhould pleaſe God in his juſt judgment upon us for our manifold offences once more to ſubject us to the fiery, perſecuting ſpirit of bigotry and ſuperſtition, who is ſo blind as not to ſee the conſequence? It is too, too long we have been the dupes of French and Popiſh craft and politics. What! Shall the Seraph's form aſſumed for

ever draw off our attention from the cloven foot. Look abroad and ſee, if you can find ſuch another divided nation, a nation that harbours ſo many vipers within its own breaſt, ſecure by ſituation and its own native ſtrength from foreign enemies, weak only through its own diviſions.

Let all Proteſtants then ſo far imitate the example of their common enemies, as to unite, as one man, in the proſecution of their common intereſt, love as brethren, and make thoſe dutiful returns to our moſt gracious Sovereign, for his vigilant care and protection of us, which they do deſerve; as zealous in promoting his honour and the peace of his government, as he is in ſecuring to us and our poſterity all our national, civil and religious rights. Laſtly, to our loyalty to the King, and charity to each other, let us be ſure to add that higher obedience, that is due to the great King of Kings. Then ſhall we be as a city that is at unity in itſelf, to which God hath promiſed his bleſſing. And then, as the hills ſtand about Jeruſalem, ſo will the Lord ſtand about this church and nation, againſt which the gates of France and Spain, and

and Rome and Hell, never ſhall prevail. God grant that we may all ſee the things that belong both to our temporal and eternal peace, before they be for ever hid from our eyes. To him be rendered and aſcribed, Dominion and Power, Thankſgiving and Praiſe, now and for evermore.—*Amen.*

END OF VOL. I.

BRITISH
11 FE 76
MUSEUM